

THE PROMISED is'LAND: RECONSTRUCTING HISTORY AND IDENTITY
AMONG THE BLACK SEMINOLES OF ANDROS ISLAND, BAHAMAS

By

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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By

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Chairman: Professor John H. Moore

Major Department: Anthropology Department

The Seminole Indians of Florida have been the focus of a substantial amount of anthropological and historical research, some of which acknowledges their alliance with Africans in Florida. Africans escaping enslavement on the plantations of Georgia and South Carolina sought sanctuary among the Seminole Indians in Florida beginning in the early 18th century. They became allies against land-grabbing European Americans and slave catchers--both European and Native American. Their harmonious coexistence led the Africans to adopt the name 'Black Seminoles.'

Although the Africans had escaped the plantations, they could not escape the persistent harassment of European Americans who threatened their return to enslavement or assassination. A small number of the Black Seminoles ultimately escaped once again, and sailed to the "Promised isLand" of Andros in the

Bahamas. None of the Seminole Indian literature, however, makes more than cursory reference to these Bahamian Black Seminoles.

This ethnohistorical study provides insight into both the historical and the contemporary culture of the unique community of Black Seminoles on Andros Island, Bahamas and closes a void in the anthropological and historical records. I conducted this research while in residence for one year on Andros Island, Bahamas. The potential long-range benefit to the field of anthropology is that it will stimulate investigations of the dynamic cultural interaction of Native Americans and Africans in the African Diaspora, a subject which has been sorely neglected. Native Americans and Africans suffered similar fates at the hands of colonizing Europeans throughout the Americas and the Caribbean. Discovering the nature and scope of contacts between Native Americans and Africans in these regions of the African Diaspora, and how these affected the configuration and formation of cultural identity, is critical to an understanding of oppressed peoples of the world and to the analysis of cultural adaptation and social change.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The aims of this ethnography are, first, to interrogate both the self-defined and the ascribed cultural identity of descendants of Black Seminoles who reside in the Bahamas, and second, to document the historical background of their heritage that is unique among Bahamians. Their ancestors fled certain death or enslavement in Florida for the sanctuary of the “Promised isLand” of Andros beginning in 1821. There, they dispersed throughout the island, the majority establishing their primary settlement at Red Bays where approximately 280 of their descendants remain today.

Rationale for this Research Study

The Seminole Indians of Florida have been the focus of a substantial amount of anthropological and historical research (e.g., Foster 1935; McReynolds 1957; Hudson 1966; Fairbanks 1973; Littlefield 1977; Klos 1989; Weisman 1989; Covington 1993; Mulroy 1993; Porter 1945, 1996; Wright 1986; Giddings 1858). While many of these publications acknowledge the presence of Africans among the Seminoles in Florida, Oklahoma, and Texas, none of them make more than cursory reference to those who fled to the Bahamas.

Africans escaping enslavement on the plantations of Georgia and South Carolina began joining Seminole Indians in Florida in the 18th century. They

became allies against land-grabbing European Americans and slave catchers-- both European and Native American. Their harmonious coexistence resulted in some intermarriages, but more often they resided in adjacent settlements. This close association led the Africans to name themselves the "Black Seminoles."

Although the Black Seminoles (also referred to as Black Indians, Seminole Negroes, Afro-Seminoles, and black Muscolgulges: Katz 1986; Mulroy 1993; Porter 1945; Goggin 1946) had escaped the plantations, they could not escape the persistent harassment of European Americans who threatened their return to enslavement. Some of them made the long trek to Indian Territory when the Seminoles were forced to relocate there; some were recaptured, others were killed. Yet a small number ultimately escaped once again, and sailed for freedom to the "Promised isLand" of Andros in The Bahamas.

Accounts written by several scholars conducting research in the Bahamas on other topics have referenced the Seminole heritage of people living on Andros Island. While recording the Folktales of Andros Island, Parsons (1918) encountered Androsians who claimed a Seminole Indian ancestry. Parsons stated, however, that "but with the exception of two women, mother and daughter, I saw no physical suggestion of it" (1918: ix).

While conducting archaeological research on Andros Island in 1937, Goggin (1946) reported that he met Felix MacNeil, an old Black Bahamian who was the grandson of Scipio Bowlegs, a Seminole Indian reputed to have been among the first to settle in Red Bays.

Porter also questioned the fate of the Black Seminoles in "Notes on the Seminole Negroes in the Bahamas" (1945), but he conducted no first-hand research on the topic. In his most recent book, published posthumously in 1996, just a few sentences are devoted to those who fled Florida for the sanctuary of The Bahamas (Porter 1996: 26).

Goggin noted that "a more thorough study of the Red Bay settlement would be interesting from many points of view and is certainly a worthy project" (Goggin 1946: 206), yet none has been forthcoming, until now. This study represents the first substantial ethnographic investigation of the Black Seminoles in the Bahamas.

Contribution to Anthropology

This research documents the ethnohistory of the Black Seminoles of Andros Island, closing a gap in the anthropological record. The potential long-range benefit to the field of anthropology is that it will stimulate investigations of the dynamic cultural interaction of Native Americans and Africans in the African Diaspora, a subject that has been sorely neglected. Native Americans and Africans suffered similar fates at the hands of colonizing Europeans throughout the Americas and the Caribbean. Discovering the nature and scope of contacts between Native Americans and Africans in the African Diaspora, and how these affected the configuration and formation of cultural identity, is critical to an understanding of oppressed peoples of the world and to the analysis of cultural adaptation and social change.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study, using ethnohistory as the primary methodological tool. Employing this methodology, I engage in what Dean Snow calls the "collective madness" that results from combining anthropology and history. He observes that

Anthropologists will continue to drive historians crazy with their sloppy source criticism and other technical failings. Historians will continue to drive anthropologists crazy with notions of cause and effect that seem to lie outside the bounds of known human behavior. But out of this collective madness comes scholarship that is much better stuff than it could ever be if we stayed behind our disciplinary fences. (Snow 1981:v)

With information gleaned from archival documents and secondary sources, as well as ethnographic accounts from interviews of descendants, a clearer picture emerges of the people called Black Seminoles: their exodus from United States territory, their journey to long-sought freedom in The Bahamas, and their reinvention of identity and community.

From 1996 to 1997, I recorded the oral histories of Black Seminole descendants in several Andros Island settlements--Red Bays, Nicholl's Town, Lowe Sound, Mastic Point, Staniard Creek, Fresh Creek, and Mangrove Cay. This dissertation, however, focuses on the people of Red Bays because the critical mass of Black Seminole descendants in the Bahamas reside there. Semi-structured interviews were based upon the following questions:

- (1) Do you have relatives who came to the Bahamas from Florida in the 1800s?
- (2) If so, who were they (paternal, maternal, etc.)?

- (3) Do you know whether they were part- or full-blood Seminole Indian?
- (4) If part or full-blood African, do you know what African nation they or their ancestors came from?
- (5) Were there any stories or practices passed down in your family that have their roots in African or Indian folklore/culture? If so, what are they?
- (6) Do you continue to keep these stories/practices alive today?
- (7) Do you actively recognize your African/Indian (Black Seminole) heritage?
- (8) Do you identify more with this heritage, or more with being a Bahamian?
- (9) What does being a "Bahamian" or "Black Seminole" mean to you?

The answers to these questions provided the bases for further analysis of their status in Bahamian society (locally and nationally), and the existence of African and/or Seminole Indian cultural retentions. I sought answers to whether

- (1) there is a strong identification with Seminole and/or African ancestry in the Andros communities? If not, what has replaced it?
- (2) identification with Black Seminole ancestry ever afforded any political or social (e.g., governmental recognition, business ownership) benefit as it does with Black Seminoles in the United States?
- (3) there is evidence of cultural traits identifiable from either Seminole Indian and/or African traditions, or a fusion of both, in the language, religious customs, crafts, livelihood strategies, social structure in these settlements today?

The data obtained from participant observation and interviews are useful in understanding the human dynamic of racial and cultural identification and in investigating how the Black Seminoles' descendants interpret and negotiate their history and present day existence. The oral histories that I gleaned from in-depth interviews illuminate various dimensions of community life--past and present--and reveal how people use images and symbols to order their

experiences. Oral histories provide what Geertz (1973) calls "thick description," that in turn yields multiple perspectives and a variety of details about life experience.

The devastating and complex impact of colonialism is often a missing factor in analyses of societies of the African Diaspora. Research conducted in an ahistorical vacuum lacks contemplation of the element and effect of power relations that impact the nature of social, cultural and political organization.

This ethnohistorical study provides insight into both the historical and the contemporary culture of this unique community in The Bahamas. Attention to history allows a glimpse of the unfolding processes of time (Harrison 1995) and as well distinguishes levels of analysis that reveal the stratification of meaning extant in particular events (Foucault 1972).

Despite the inherent hermeneutical limitations of materialist analysis and discourse, Wolf's (1990) notion of structural power--"the power that structures the political economy"--is particularly useful in this analysis

... because it allows us to delineate how the forces of the world impinge upon the people we study, without falling back into an anthropological nativism that postulates supposedly isolated societies and uncontaminated cultures, either in the present or in the past. There is no gain in false romanticization that pretends that real people doing real things inhabit self-enclosed and self-sufficient universes. (1990: 587)

People's "lived experiences" have traditionally been obscured by structural functional and materialist analyses that derive from restricted, ahistoric, and synchronic perspectives. In their neglect of in-depth interviews,

oral histories and archival resources, these methods hamper the discovery of the context within which people interpret their own lives and identities. An ethnohistorical approach contextualizes events and contemplates "the complex interplay of hegemonic and subaltern cultural stances" (Harrison 1995: 4).

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1, the Introduction, establishes the aims of this dissertation, provides the rationale for undertaking the study, outlines the significance of this research to the field of anthropology, and delineates the methodology I employed to accomplish my goals.

Chapter 2, Fieldwork, describes my rite of passage into the profession of anthropology, and situates me within this process.

Chapter 3, The Country, provides an overview of The Bahamas, her people, and her sociopolitical climate. Background on Andros Island, the research site, is also presented.

Chapter 4, Review of the Literature, contextualizes this study within the extant literature. It provides an historical background of the Seminoles, and Black Seminoles in the United States.

Chapter 5, An Historical Perspective on the Black Seminole Presence in The Bahamas, traces the experiences of the Black Seminoles from the time of their arrival there until present day.

Chapter 6, A Contemporary Perspective on the Black Seminole Presence in The Bahamas, describes the people of Red Bays, Andros Island, Bahamas,

today, including demographics, community culture, livelihood strategies, and social structure.

Chapter 7, *Cultural Identity and Cultural Retentions*, discusses the parameters of cultural identity in general and, then, particularizes these to the Black Seminole descendants.

Chapter 8, the Conclusion, summarizes the materials and ideas presented in the preceding chapters. The Appendices include topographical and genealogical “maps” of the Red Bays settlement, a demography of Red Bays, a list of common Bahamian surnames, and excerpts from Baptismal and Slave Registries.

CHAPTER 2 FIELDWORK

"I Reach"¹

My rite of passage into the profession of anthropology commenced in November 1996. I arrived in Red Bays, Andros Island, to begin my one-year residency, toting conscious and subconscious 'baggage'--bulging with Westernized, womanist² views--that was gradually unpacked over the course of the next year. I felt twinges of guilt whenever I caught myself measuring or judging events and people there by my impalpable, yet omnipresent, cultural yardstick:

Journal Entry: May 2, 1997

We talk of many things, including her relationships with ____ and others in RB; how they take advantage of her kindness, never thinking of repayment [of money loaned] and how she never stands up to them and demands it. I tell her that she's really not helping them; she's an enabler, helping them to continue their dependency that way. I liken it to a scene where she is stretching out in the street and telling them to run her over--over & over again because she likes it that way. She laughs and says (as she always does when I speak my mind plainly), "Rosslyn, you could talk fool, girl."

I was warmly welcomed into the Red Bays community, in part, I believe, because it was Rev. Newton--church Pastor, respected community leader and

¹In Bahamian dialect, to "reach" means to arrive at your destination.

²Womanist is the term I prefer to use in place of "feminist" in order to avoid the negative connotations associated with the latter term.

teacher there for 30 years--who introduced me; in part, because most folks were excited about this opportunity to share their oral history; and in part because of our shared African ancestry. Many of the men there expressed (overtly and covertly) a curiosity about me (consequently, I was watched suspiciously by many of Red Bays' women) because I am single, a novelty, and considered 'bright'. In The Bahamas, the term 'bright' implies a light brown skin tone that is viewed as an asset. This preference for "whiteness" is reinforced when it is displayed by an economically and culturally dominant neighboring country; for The Bahamas this is the United States (Hughes 1981). Among Black Bahamians, as in much of the West Indies and Latin America, degrees of whiteness determine status "in a continuous social-class gradient . . . the lighter the complexion, the greater the economic and social opportunities" (Cox 1971: 361).

Another label attached to me was "American." This was a rather unique experience for me, having grown up in the United States where the Black-White binary racial paradigm and persistent racism have questioned the validity of my identity as a "true" American because of my skin color. Now here I am, in The Bahamas--a country where people of African descent are 85 percent of the total population, and living in Red Bays whose population is 100 percent African descendants (with a pinch of Seminole ancestry in the mix)--discovering myself once again set apart, distinguished this time in a 'positive' way because of the *shade* of my skin color. Ironically, even in apparently homogeneous situations, people devise some means of discriminating that results in hierarchy.

Once they were convinced that I was not rich (a widely-held assumption about Americans in this tourist-driven economy), and not a "DEA" (Drug Enforcement Agent), my work among Red Bayans progressed relatively smoothly. I remained, however, very much an enigma in Red Bays as a woman on my own, visiting a foreign country without a man in tow. I was constantly queried by the men of Red Bays: "How could your man let you come all the way down here ALONE." They found it incomprehensible that I did not have -- nor feel the need to have--the explicit permission of a husband or fiancée to be here.

Situating my "Self"

The subjective effects inherent in qualitative research can never be eliminated, but can be addressed by acknowledging the power relationships that are based upon race, class, gender, and knowledge, and by affirming the ways that these relationships affect the research environment (McClaurin 1996; Harrison 1991; Whitehead 1980). This approach encourages an investigation of the social relationship between myself and the respondents and situates me within the research process. As revealed in the following journal entry, I was keenly aware of all these issues with respect to my position, reception, and perception in the settlement. As an educated, 'bright,' American, independent woman, I automatically achieved a status in the settlement unattainable for any other woman there.

*Journal Entry: 2/12/97 Thoughts on Fieldwork:
Here, on the edge of pineyards and sea, I am*

*looked upon by men and women as an enigma.
 Feared (resented?) by men because I am an example
 of female latitude (independence) they do not wish their women to
 glimpse . . . perhaps.
 Gossiped about by women ("who is that 'bright' American woman?")
 who eye me suspiciously
 as I talk with their men, and their female 'enemies' in the settlement. . .
 Will they trust me when I come talk to them, after seeing me talking to "her"?
 Coerced by children to supply them with money or candy . . .
 After all, I'm sure they believe, I am from the US...I must be rich!
 Weary under the pressure of multiple expectations
 from home, school and here. Yet
 I rise when "day clean",
 Prepared to make each day meaningful.
 After all. . .
 I cannot stand outside my skin as the "observer."
 This is not only my "fieldwork"...
 This is my life!*

I vividly recall this day; struck by the realization that participant observation is definitely not a neutral task. Texts on the nature of fieldwork that I perused before embarking upon this journey had, of course, attested to this fact, but the words just did not penetrate my psyche until I was here. . . in it. Using the "spyglass of anthropology" (Hurston 1942), my aim was to pinpoint, elaborate and analyze their culture, and their lived experience, that is not always at a conscious level for them (Mead and Metraux 1953). Sometimes this process felt artificial, or invasive. I realized that not only was I impacting their lives, but they mine.

This ethnohistorical account is offered in full acknowledgment of my own biases and filters. I have grappled with my subjective presence and am satisfied that my rendering is "how I saw it" (see Hernandez 1995). In her

autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Zora Neale Hurston gives voice to my feelings so much more eloquently:

Nothing that God ever made is the same thing to more than one person. That is natural. There is no single face in nature, because every eye that looks upon it, sees it from its own angle. So every man's spice box seasons his own food. Naturally, I picked up the reflections of life around me with my own instruments, and absorbed what I gathered according to my inside juices. (1942: 45)

CHAPTER 3 THE COUNTRY

Bahamaland

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is an archipelago, consisting of 700 islands (only 32 of which are inhabited) and 2400 cays and rocks that stretch from the southeastern coast of Florida eastward toward the Windward Passage north of Cuba and Haiti (Figure 1). During the colonial era, The Bahamas was alternately claimed by the Spanish, French and British. Bahamians achieved their Independence from Britain on July 10, 1973.

Approximately 65 percent of the country's 255,000 population resides on New Providence, an 80 square mile island; the majority of people on this island reside in the capital city of Nassau. Nassau is the primary hub of tourism, The Bahamas' largest industry. Tourism generates an estimated 75 percent of The Bahamas' gross national product (GNP) and employs two-thirds of the workforce, directly or indirectly. Social services in Nassau are heavily burdened by the combined effects of (1) social, environmental and economic costs associated with tourism; (2) substantial migration from the Family Islands; and (3) the large influx of Haitian refugees (Collinwood 1989a: 7). Another 15 percent of the population lives on Grand Bahama Island, site of The Bahamas' second

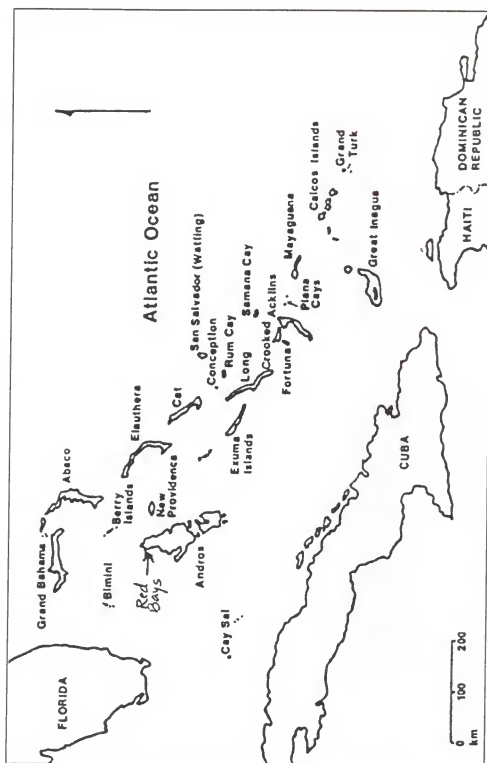


Figure 1. Map of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas

largest tourist destination, Freeport. The remainder of the population is spread throughout thirty Family Islands, many of which are sparsely populated.¹

This demographic scenario has remained virtually the same throughout the history of The Bahamas. The Bahamas has historically suffered from scarcity of natural resources, widely dispersed population, epidemics, and vast destruction wrought by hurricanes and wars among European powers vying for control of the country. These exigencies created a scenario wherein all Bahamians were integral to achieving the colony's viability, that explains to some degree why the institution of slavery there varied from the form that was manifested in other West Indian countries.

The Bahamas presents an extraordinary conjuncture in the complex legacy of slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean region. The experiences of African peoples there deviated from the norm of West Indian plantation life in several ways. First, there was the presence of a large number of Africans who had been 'liberated' by the British from slave ships en route to Spanish colonies after the British abolished the slave trade. These liberated Africans were not actually freed upon arriving in British territory. As subjects of open-ended indentureships, the experience for most was merely a different form of slavery. Some among the British colonizers were apparently sympathetic to the plight of apprenticed Africans. This attitude is clearly evident in some of the records of

¹Formerly known as the "Out Islands," the term was changed to "Family Islands" after Bahamians gained their Independence on July 10, 1973 and it refers to all islands other than New Providence.

that era, and is aptly illustrated in the following governor's despatch that deserves duplication almost in its entirety in order to obtain a more complete perspective.

... [I] am unwilling to believe in the intuition of Governor again to assign over to Masters those persons who had completed periods of apprenticeship, some of them upwards of 14 years and none of them under seven, and who, as appears in the course of the investigation now proceeding with, had given the most decided proofs of their being able to provide for themselves in the absolute fact that, for many years of their apprenticeship and some of them for the whole period, they had been left by their holders not only to do this but in addition to pay to the holders considerable weekly or monthly sums. The average of the sums so paid by the able-bodied Africans appears in general to have been about six dollars per month. --Sailors paid more and the holders took no further notice of them than to receive this money, and to find employment for them in cases where they did not find it for themselves. `There may exist reason to doubt whether the industry of these persons would continue equally steady if no demand was made upon the fruits of it. . . . I willingly allow the full forces of this doubt and the propriety of being guided by it, but it appears to me that after the completion of one period of apprenticeship industry should be converted to the interest of the African ultimately, and not to that of an individual who had no sort of other regard for him. Wherefore I would respectfully suggest some plan like the following being adopted. The Africans / who had completed a period of apprenticeship / to be bound over to the Collector for the purpose of Protection "and to the maintaining peace order and good government among them." And with the power to the Collector to assign them over to a person who shall be especially appointed for the purpose, which person so appointed is to make demand from each African monthly, or rather weekly, for the sum which he may have usually been in the habit of paying to their former holders or for any sum which in the respective cases may be deemed reasonable earnings - having thus ascertained that the African has been industrious, there will be returned to him said portion of the sum as may appear at the time amply sufficient for his immediate reasonable purposes and the surplus deposited with a savings bank to be afterwards issued to him where and how it may be done best to his advantage. Many of the forfeited Africans are connubially connected with slaves and have affinities by them . . . They suggested the purchase of their connections might perhaps be brought about. Respectfully submitting what I have stated, I beg to leave to repeat the question "Whether it is the intention of the Order in council of 19th

July 1825 that those Africans who have already completed full periods of apprenticeship should again be liable to be assigned by the Collector to other persons for a period not exceeding seven years?"

I have the honour to be with respect

My Lord

Lewis Grant (Major General, Governor)

(GOVERNOR'S DESPATCHES 1827-1831, original emphases)

This communication illustrates a remarkable consideration for the welfare of Africans in the Bahamas, a concern that increasingly resonated throughout the British West Indies during this period. The concern reached a crescendo in 1834 when the institution was finally abolished, ironically, however, there was an additional four year period of indenture after 1834.

Another way that the institution of slavery varied in The Bahamas was that, in contrast to most of the British West Indies, many Bahamian plantation-owners were residents. They showed less proclivity toward physical violence against the enslaved, and were "more concerned with the preservation of their capital and less with meeting production targets than hired overseers might have been" (Hughes 1981: 6-7). The third distinguishing factor was geography. Large scale agriculture--such as that practiced in other British colonies--was attempted, but quickly abandoned; the lack of topsoil on most islands made it virtually impossible. These experiential variances have led to a perception by some scholars that the Bahamian colonial experience was benevolent in comparison to that of the rest of the West Indies. This, I suggest, is a misperception, one that has been responsible for the relative absence of the Bahamas in much of the research and literature on slavery and colonialism in the

circum-Caribbean region. While Africans enslaved there did escape the ravages of "sweet power" (Mintz 1985) to which many West Indians were subject, the socialization of slavery and colonialism in the Bahamas was nonetheless physically, psychologically and culturally destructive (Johnson 1991; Saunders 1985; Knight 1997). The "structures and dynamics of racial inequality" (Harrison 1995: 47) that manifested in colonial Bahamas are similar to those found in other parts of the West Indies and the African Diaspora in general.

The Bahamians

People of African descent constitute the vast majority of the Bahamian population and distinctions are often made between "Black" and "White" Bahamians by Bahamians themselves. The Black-White binary racial paradigm prevalent in the United States also operates in modern Bahamian society, with some interesting nuances. White or "Pass-as-White" Bahamians, currently numbering about 15 percent of the population, are divided into three sub-classes: (1) the Bay Street Boys or Conchy Joes,² who largely inherit their wealth and emulate the lifestyles of former British administrators as much as possible under a Black government; (2) poor, semi-literate Whites; and (3) Family Island Whites who, though isolated and undereducated, live moderately comfortable lifestyles by dominating the boating, fishing, and cottage tourism industries on

²"Bay Street Boys" refers to the White merchants and lawyers. Conchy Joes is a term for those whose families were not among the elite class of "White" Bahamians (often just hardworking fishermen and spongers) and who resided in The Bahamas before the arrival of the aristocratic Loyalists in the late 18th century.

their islands (Collinwood 1989b: 10). Those who "Pass-as-White" actually have what is termed in Bahamian dialect a 'lick-o'-de-brush',³ but the principle of hypodescent⁴ does not operate as stringently here as it does in the United States. Black Bahamians discriminate among one another based upon skin coloration. The light-skinned or "bright" people have traditionally been viewed as more attractive and have often enjoyed better opportunities than their darker brethren as a result.

Race and Governance in The Bahamas

The two major political parties in The Bahamas are the Free National Movement (FNM) and the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP). Prior to 1953, the Bay Street Boys' hegemony was so entrenched that they perceived no challenge to their authority and, therefore, no need to form political parties. The 1950s and 1960s, however, marked a period of unprecedented political activity in the Bahamas. The Black majority formed the first Bahamian political party in 1953: the PLP. The PLP was initially ridiculed by White Bahamians who branded it the "Negro Communist Party." Just five years later, however, the Bay Street Boys recognized the serious threat the PLP had become and, fearing an erosion of their power, they organized the United Bahamian Party (UBP). Immediately,

³A 'lick-o-de-brush' refers to having some African ancestry.

⁴Hypodescent is otherwise referred to as the "one drop rule;" if a person has one drop of African blood, they are automatically considered 'black' (Harris 1964). According to Harris, "[t]his rule of hypodescent is . . . an invention which we in the United States have made in order to keep biological facts from intruding into our collective racist fantasies" (Harris 1964: 56).

the UBP attempted to gerrymander electoral boundaries and sought to delay women's suffrage, that would have effectively doubled the size of the Black electorate (Dodge 1989; Hughes 1989).

The redistricting act of 1967 was the vehicle by which the Black majority finally gained control of the government; PLP leader Lynden Pindling was elected as Prime Minister, the first Black Bahamian to lead the country. Upon gaining control of the government, the PLP rallied the masses of Black Bahamians under the banner of "Bahamianisation." The explicit political goal of this policy was to give Black Bahamians preferential access to employment and ownership opportunities in business and industry. Its sociocultural goal was to elevate Black Bahamians' self-image, to excavate their pride that had been buried under centuries of colonization; heightened self-esteem would ostensibly flow from the economic empowerment induced by Bahamianisation. Bahamianisation policies had both dramatic successes and failures.

Governmental encouragement of Bahamian entrepreneurship became problematic, however, because most Bahamians who purchased businesses and real estate did not have a firm capital base and, therefore, incurred substantial bank debt that limited growth potential. This predicament resulted in the creation of few jobs and the loss of many. Unemployment rates rose dramatically; from virtually 0% in the 1960s to 25% in 1983 (Collinwood 1989b).

Bahamianisation policies did succeed in creating a new Black middle class. Ironically, however, an unforeseen consequence of Bahamianisation was

the marginalization of the masses of people who were most victimized by the racial discrimination of the past, and who had been the PLP's strongest supporters. Policy detractors argued that Bahamianisation

looked outwards to cut back external intervention in and control over the Bahamian economy rather than inwards to redistribute wealth or power within the existing Bahamian society. In sum it was archetypal of the nationalist bourgeoisie approach to the needs of a small polity/economy/society. (Wilson 1989: 81)

The result of this approach was

essentially a replacement of the political, social, and economic hegemony of a white bourgeoisie by a hegemony of a black bourgeoisie that is complete in the political sector, largely complete in the social sector, but still incomplete in the economic sector, where the white bourgeoisie retains a predominant share. (Hughes 1989: 69)

The sense of continuity garnered in the 25 year reign for the PLP certainly fostered stability, but it also sowed the seeds of complacency and corruption in the Bahamas. The PLP administration was plagued by drug-related scandals and fluctuating economic cycles closely tied to events in the United States (Collinwood and Dodge 1989b; LaFlamme 1985). In the early 1980s, illicit drug trafficking produced great wealth, some of which found its way into legitimate investments. Cash from the drug trade fueled the growth of the banking industry and led to the creation of what has been termed a "false economy." Compounding matters for the PLP government, the United States took a strong position in the 1980s alleging Bahamian government involvement in the drug trade's facilitation. This helped to damage the image of the Bahamas and led to

a precipitous decline in tourism--its prime industry--and a concomitant rise in unemployment rates.

The Free National Movement (FNM) is the current governing party of The Bahamas, led by Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham. The reputation of the FNM is contentious among some Bahamians. Critics charge that the party is a puppet of the White Bahamian power structure because a group of former UBP members, the Bay Street Boys, were among its founders. Other founders were former PLP members, ousted from the party for alleged collusion with the United States government in its attempt to effect the downfall of the PLP during the 1980s drug scandals.

The FNM wrenched power from the PLP in the 1992 General Election and were highly successful in the 1997 General Election that was held in March while I was conducting my dissertation research.⁵ The divisive nature of Bahamian politics became quite evident during the campaign, and revealed complex socio-cultural dynamics nationally as well as among the residents of Red Bays, the settlement where I resided. I was struck by the intensity of emotions displayed during the election process. I discovered that National politics are closer to the average Bahamian than to Americans because, unlike the United States, the General Election offers their only opportunity to voice an opinion.

⁵The FNM went "Two Straight" (their campaign motto), decisively defeating the PLP in the March 1997 election by eventually claiming 35 of the 40 seats in the House of Assembly. This was a clear mandate from marginalized Bahamians who voted to stake their hopes for a better future in the FNM, despite its controversial history.

Bahamian elections have always been reputed as "rough and rumbustious" affairs (Payne 1993: 68), but the General Election of 1997 established an unfortunate new benchmark when a Minister of Parliament was slain by pro-PLP gang members. The political battle has customarily been limited to verbal sparring. Vindictive personal criticism, character defamation and accusations of clientilism are typically "sandwiched in between lengthy quotations from or allusions to the Bible, for no party in the Bahamas will ever come to power unless leaders are seen as Christians" (Collinwood 1989b: 18-19). Politicians of both parties skillfully employ the use of Biblical imagery, an established feature of Bahamian political debate. Former Prime Minister Pindling has been portrayed as Moses, the savior-hero-leader, who symbolically led his people from Egypt (i.e., a White-controlled, colonized state) to the promised land of majority rule (Hughes 1989; see also Edelman 1972). Similarly, the FNM ascribes to religious symbolism as evinced in their motto: "Forward, Upward, Onward, Together, with God as our Beacon, our Leader and our Rock" (FNM Manifesto II 1997: 4).

Following is an ethnographic account gleaned from my journal entries that provides a glimpse into the remarkable dynamic of election time in the settlement of Red Bays.

The FNM rally at the North Andros high school, twenty miles outside the settlement, drew most of the FNM supporters from Red Bays; it was an "event." The school bus, that daily carried Red Bays' children to this same location, became a jam-packed campaign bus this night. At the rally, speakers strained to have their voices heard above the clamor of the crowd and the blare of calypso music. Each speaker was escorted to the stage surrounded by a procession of dancing and

cheering supporters. Later, the serious issues were discussed as the candidate for Minister of Parliament and the Prime Minister advanced their platforms. . .

. . . The Prime Minister seized the opportunity to criticize the PLP for the lack of women in their government and on their candidate roster, and to mention the Andros Islanders' historically loyal PLP voting record. He warned that if they did not join in with the FNM majority, their island might be left out of the FNM Manifesto, the elaborate plans to make life "Better, Better" (the FNM campaign chant) in the Bahamas.

Ingraham said to the crowd, "You make your bed hard, you lie in it hard" (1997). This message reverberated throughout Red Bays for days afterward. PLP supporters brushed off the obvious threatening tone of Ingraham's remark by saying, "Red Bays people like a hard bed." FNM supporters, however, used it to persuade the undecided to cast their votes for the FNM, pointing out that for progress to occur in Red Bays, they must join the winning team; pre-election polls clearly indicated another victory for the FNM Prime Minister.

Nevertheless, some hard-line PLPs simply refused to enter the fold; it was understandably difficult for them to believe that their party, that had ruled for so long (25 years!), could possibly lose once again. The strongest PLP supporters were those people who had obviously benefitted from PLP policies and favoritism in the past. PLP members owned both of the 'shops' (small stores stocking a limited line of groceries), and they were local government representatives. This status gave them a substantial amount of control over fund allocation and, therefore, some amount of influence over the lives of Red Bayans. The fact that many people in this rural settlement are illiterate increased their vulnerability to the various "spins" applied by literate folk—of both political persuasions—to the campaign rhetoric and literature.

Party rivalries among Red Bays residents escalated as the campaign wore on. Accusations of corruption and pay-offs on both sides of the political aisle wrought angry confrontations between friends and family members. One PLP supporter threatened his sons and daughters with eviction from their home if they did not vote his way. The school bus driver, a staunch FNM supporter, raised the ire of many residents when he refused to pick up their children at the usual bus stop, that happened to be in the yard of a PLP supporter. They accused one another of being "rude." Sisters "fell out," no longer visiting with or "hailing" one another, and neighbors were "ravving" each other. Serious rifts were created that did not heal for months after the election. Yet, while the voters were on a collision course, election fever running high, the FNM and PLP candidates for MP were rather friendly rivals. While one candidate offered his opponent a lunch after the campaign was over, the other pledged a bottle of champagne. The ironies of politics.

On election day, the Primary School in Red Bays became the polling place and most of the eligible voters lined up at 9:00 am sharp to cast their votes. Sporting the tee-shirts designed with logos of the PLP or FNM, they filed in a few at a time, returning to the dirt yard outside with broad smiles and blackened thumbs, marred by the indelible ink required as a precaution against voter fraud.

Milling around outside the polling place were most of the men from the settlement, drunk with election fervor and Green Seal rum. Some drove around the 1/2 mile circumference of Red Bays, honking the horns of their cars that were heavily tattooed with bumper stickers.

ZNS (pronounced: zed-en-ess), the national radio station, broadcasted the election results later that night; Red Bays residents listened anxiously for word of their candidate's standing. They had lined the narrow main road on foot or in cars with radios blaring, until they had to scurry for cover from the downpour that erupted suddenly. Many swore that this rain signaled a blessing for both Red Bays and the Bahamas. The settlement's FNM supporters erupted in cheers as the returns came in declaring an overwhelming victory for their party; disappointed PLP supporters quietly withdrew into their homes. The FNM candidate for Minister of Parliament won handily in Red Bays, and Hubert Ingraham was again elected as Prime Minister. A convoy of cars along with the school bus carried the revelers to the Minister's campaign headquarters "up de shore" where the Red Bayans joined hundreds of others in celebration of a historic transition for Androsians; this marked the first time that the FNM party had ever carried North Andros Island. The FNM's policy of Globalisation that promised a better life for Crab Creek folks now has to deliver.

The FNM defines their Globalisation policy as an open invitation to foreign investment, what they consider the economic bridge to the new millennium. Elimination of the restrictive practices of Bahamianisation policies, including removal of political intervention in the issuance of business licenses, provides incentives for foreign investment. Through divestment of government controlled industries, alliances can be formed between the government and the private sector (FNM Manifesto II 1997).

Traditionally, Bahamian economic strategies have emphasized the enclave, or vertical integration mode of development, where the emphasis is on infrastructural facilities for the tourism industry, and where economic benefits accrue principally to transnational corporation stockholders (Edie 1991; Bethel 1989). Any benefits to indigenous (Family Island) communities have been

essentially fortuitous. Revising this strategy to incorporate more integrated or horizontal developmental strategies that generate smaller scale projects will be of particular benefit to Family Island communities like Red Bays. These types of projects will attract indigenous capital and management, essentially creating a redistribution of wealth and employment opportunities so scarce outside of Nassau. The FNM has recently affirmed initiatives designed to exploit the tourism industry as a basis for horizontal developmental strategies that can potentially yield nation-wide benefits. Linkages between the hospitality industry, agro-industries, fisheries, and light manufacturing could not only reduce imports, but may also increase the range and volume of exports (Deveaux 1997; Ramsaran 1989).

Andros Island

Andros Island figures importantly in the FNM's future plans for growth in the Bahamas. Andros has often been referred to as "The Big Yard" because the island represents 43 percent of the total acreage of The Bahamas (Figure 2). It is alternately referred to as the "Sleeping Giant" (Deveaux 1997) because the island's substantial natural and human resources have long remained latent, although it possesses the largest tract of arable land in The Bahamas (Albury 1975).

During the March 1997 General Election campaign, Hon. Dr. Earl D. Deveaux, then FNM candidate for Minister of Parliament in North Andros



Figure 2. Map of Andros Island

(where Red Bays is located), published a booklet⁶ that outlines extensive plans to invigorate the Androsian economy, including the following: transportation (repairing roads, expanding airport facilities to accommodate international flights); agriculture (exploitation of the best export-quality crops for Andros' location, climate and market); manufacturing (small canneries, wood products from the vast forests, food storage); forestry (environmentally-conscious management of resources); fishing (more productive fishing methods, fish processing facilities, more sport fishing); real estate (development for tourism, marinas, second homes); and education (key to improving worker productivity and technical capability).⁷

These ambitious plans will undoubtedly entail incremental implementation and require a long-term vision, provisos that the folks in Red Bays (as well as many other Androsians) are not inclined to easily assimilate. The younger generation in Red Bays is no longer geared toward the strenuous work ethic that ensured the survival of their ancestors. As a result of their transformation to an almost exclusively cash economy—that is fueled by profits from the 'informal economy,' improvements in the infrastructure, and their proximity to the United States and to the Bahamian capital, Nassau—life in Red

⁶"A Social and Economic Contract with the People of Andros," Deveau, E.D. 1996. Nassau: Media Publishing, Ltd.

⁷According to Deveau, previous mismanagement of forestry resources led to irresponsible harvesting of timber for pulpwood. He notes that "the clearing of 300,000 acres of forest in 16 years is arguably the most ruthless pillage of a natural asset ever committed in The Bahamas" (1996:13).

Bays has changed dramatically over the past thirty years. These extralocal influences have severely undermined their traditional culture knowledge base and practices (Randolph 1994: 254). These issues will be further elaborated upon in Chapters 5 and 6.

Early navigational charts indicate that Andros Island was named *La Isla del Espiritu Santo* by the Spaniards. However, the etymology of its current designation has been variously attributed. It may have been named for Sir Edmund Andros, Commander of the Forces in Barbados in 1672 and from 1674, although there is no evidence that he ever set foot in the colony. In 1787 Andros became the sanctuary for approximately 1,400 Loyalists refugees from the island of San Andreas on Mosquito Coast when Spain took possession of it under the Treaty of Versailles. This may have also been the source of the island's name. Greek merchants who harvested the bountiful sponge beds of the mud flats around Andros Island for almost 100 years liked to assert that it was named for the Greek Isle, St. Andro (Hursh n.d.).

The settlement of Red Bays, my primary research site, is located on the northwestern tip of Andros, one of the Family Islands of The Bahamas. The largest island in the Bahamian archipelago, 104 miles in length and 40 miles wide, Andros is divided into three sections separated by bights (oceanic currents). Its socio-political divisions are 'North,' 'Central,' and 'South' Andros.⁸

⁸Prior to the March 1997 Bahamian General Elections, the political divisions were reduced to two North and South, but Androsians still maintain the three distinctions.

It is also the fifth largest island in the circum-Caribbean region, following Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica and Puerto Rico.

A small number of White Bahamians and expatriates live there, but approximately 95 percent of the 8,000 Androsians are of African descent. Andros Island has the reputation of being the richest repository of African culture in The Bahamas, as demonstrated in its social and economic structures, and religious traditions (Randolph 1994: 243; Saunders 1990; Cash et al. 1991). Traditional livelihood strategies on Andros Island include, fishing, farming, crabbing, and sponging. Several small fishing and diving resorts, and few tourist villas are the island's only claim to any type of tourist activity. The lack of resorts is largely due to the extremely limited infrastructure on the island. In the early years of the PLP administration, Andros underwent vast changes with the introduction of electricity, running water, roads, and, very importantly, an increase in the number of schools and teachers. These changes however were at a minimal level and, once accomplished, they were rarely augmented.

CHAPTER 4

CULTURE CHANGE AND CULTURE RETENTION

"One general characteristic of culture is what may be called its openness, its receptivity. The culture of today is always largely received from yesterday: That is what tradition or transmission means; it is a passing or sending along, a 'handing-through' from one generation to another. . . ." (Kroeber 1963 [1923]: 112)

This chapter presents a discussion of various aspects of culture change and culture retention, one of the foci of this study. Culture change is fundamentally the process of modification of individual or societal knowledge, attitudes and behavior. Herskovits distinguished this process in two ways, intra- and inter-culturally (Herskovits 1958 [1941]: 90). Intra-culture change, that results from the interaction of factions or groups within a society, he referred to as socialization, urbanization, secularization, industrialization, or enculturation (SSRC 1954: 974). Whereas, inter-culture change, induced by continuous contact *cross-culturally*, he referred to as acculturation or transculturation. It is the latter usage--acculturation or transculturation--that is most pertinent to the experience of culture change for Africans in the New World diaspora.

In order to study emergent change occurring in societies in contact, Herskovits suggested the need to establish a "cultural base line" from which the change could be measured

... and then, once equipped with the insight into past conditions, to obtain relevant data concerning the contemporary manner of living. [Subsequent] evaluation of changes resulting from cultural contact will be surer and an understanding of the effect had by the forces operative in the situation of change more clear, than if the present day culture is first studied without reference to the past. . . the study of culture change--culture as a whole--cannot be attempted without a vivid sense of the historically dynamic nature of the phenomenon. (Herskovits 1938: 25)

Ethnohistorical analysis, such as this study, allows a diachronic perspective of sociocultural change. Caution must be observed, however, because Herskovits' suggestion assumes a point in time when culture was static, a point in time where it can be codified as a specific entity, and therefore, measured. This could represent a dangerous presumption for such a dynamic process.

Culture retention is the maintenance of the complex of traditions and ideologies from the culture of origin. The ability of Africans to retain elements of the myriad African cultures that were represented among the enslaved has been a subject of much debate (Mintz and Price 1976; Frazier 1949; Alleyne 1988; Nettleford 1970). Alleyne (1988) describes three theories about what became of African Culture in the New World: (1) *Culture Stripping*--because of the brutalizing effects of slavery and the deliberate separation of slaves from similar ethnolinguistic origins, all African culture was stripped from them; (2) *Original Creation*--the proponents of this theory believe that slaves created an original new culture in the "New World", but did maintain the "deep structure" of African culture; and (3) *African Continuities*--Afro-American culture is largely an extension of African culture, that has more influence in some parts of the "New

World" than in others (Alleyne 1988: viii). Theories 1 and 2 deny or minimize the importance of African continuities. Alleyne subscribes to Theory 3, and believes that this cultural process should be viewed as "inventiveness within a tradition," rather than "creation," considering it only natural that a displaced people would rely upon memories, habits or predispositions acquired in their original culture when attempting to develop new institutions. Alleyne criticizes Caribbeanists Sidney Mintz and Richard Price for their ascription to Theory 2. Alleyne believes that the African culture is a "deep structure." I believe that this is exactly what Mintz and Price, proponents of the "Original Creation" theory, also purport. My reading of Mintz and Price's theory is that it does not discount African continuities, as Alleyne appears to construe.

African Cultural Retentions in the Diaspora

Stuart Hall describes the Caribbean as "the first, original and the purest Diaspora" (Hall 1995: 6). This area was created by "bringing together peoples from every part of the globe in a swirling vortex of greed, lust and striving, . . . reminiscent of the destructive hurricanes that sweep through the region every year" (Smith 1988: 2). The islands of the Caribbean are "the oldest colonial sphere of western European colonial expansion . . . manned almost entirely with introduced populations, and fitted to European needs . . ." (Mintz 1976: 17, 36). Because of its unusual genesis, the region embodies many aspects of the diverse peoples and cultures that came into contact there.

New institutions that enslaved Africans developed in the "New World" were created by the dynamic interaction of *past and present* realities. These institutions were not conceived in a vacuum; they were distinctive modes of expression that emanated from the creative response of enslaved Africans to a new environment, a mixture or synthesis of old and new (Alleyne 1988; Mintz and Price 1976). As Safa argues, "the dynamic quality of culture allows adaptations to new environments" (Safa 1987: 117). Such was the case for the Black Seminoles as well as the Seminole Indians. Both had already experienced an incredible amount of conflict and oppression, adapting as needed to frequently changing social and cultural exigencies. The process of cultural adaptation for the Black Seminoles commenced upon their arrival on the shores of North America and continued as they escaped to Florida and formed communities there among the Spaniards and the Seminole Indians. The diversity of African ethnic groups represented on many of the plantations from which they had effected their escape,

promoted an acceptance of cultural differences and an openness to cultural interaction. . . . Such tendencies gave African cultural grammars an integral dynamism, an expectation of culture change as a fundamental trait. (Joyner 1984: 143)

Although in most instances the populations of enslaved Africans represented heterogeneous groups

comprised of relatively complex and sophisticated cultures, the Negroes, it has been seen, met the acculturative situation in its various manifestations over the New World far differently than is customarily envisaged. Instead of representing isolated cultures, their endowments, however different in detail, possessed least

common denominators that permitted a consensus of experience to be drawn on in fashioning new, though still African-like, customs. The presence of members of native ruling houses and priests and diviners among the slaves made it possible for the cultural lifeblood to coagulate through reinterpretation instead of ebbing away into the pool of European culture. (Herskovits 1941 [1958]: 297)

Syncretic traditions emerged as the “lingua franca” for Africans whose cultural traditions could not be wholly reconstructed in the diaspora because often essential elements—people with specialized knowledge such as priestesses, priests, and diviners—were missing. As Herskovits asserts above, their traditions were by necessity reinterpreted, not lost.

In actuality there may have been many fewer cultural boundaries between the Africans imported for enslavement in the New World than has traditionally been posited. Throughout Africa, the influence of people such as diviners and religious devotees was extensive. Even during wars they enjoyed an certain amount of immunity that permitted them freedom of movement, a situation that resulted in the “diffusion of certain cultural features and patterns in [Africa] as well as in the New World diaspora (Yai 1996: 9).

Syncretisms evolved from a foundation of beliefs that are shared across and undergird many African cultures. The underlying commonalities provided a basis for community formation and the perpetuation and/or reinterpretation of various African cultural traditions.

The degree to which African cultural traditions were retained or modified in the diaspora proved contingent upon the circumstances of enslavement. In

situations where Africans were numerically in the majority and had infrequent contact with European Americans, multiple African cultures that were thrust together thrived in new ways. Life on rice or sugar plantations (primarily in the Caribbean, but also in South Carolina) that required massive numbers of laborers was vastly different than life on turpentine or upland farms (Herskovits 1941 [1958]; Littlefield 1981). On large plantations, the number of enslaved persons was sometimes 70% or more of the total population, resulting in a significant amount of contact among the enslaved, and leaving many of them relatively undisturbed by white culture. In these instances, African cultures were perpetuated to a far greater extent than on small plantations where personal survival was dependent upon adaption and acclimation to European cultures (Herskovits 1941 [1958]).

Environment was also key to the establishment of maroon communities in which the African cultural traditions could flourish. Jungles, swamps, and mountains aided slave revolts by providing protective cover for escape, and refuges for establishing autonomous communities where many Africanisms were preserved.

This was true in Guiana, in Haiti, in Brazil, in Jamaica; it is striking that in smaller, less heavily forested islands such as Barbados, St. Vincent, and the Virgin Islands, or in the United States (with the one exception of the Maroons of Florida, whose salvation lay in their joining the Indians rather than through their own unaided efforts), serious revolts were put down. (Herskovits 1958 [1941]: 113)

Africans formed maroon communities with the Seminole Indians in Florida. Later, they continued this tradition of marronage in the remote and inaccessible community of Red Bays. The majority of the original Black Seminole settlers chose to locate themselves on this northwestern tip of Andros Island precisely because of the shallow waters and dense bush, an environment that would seriously deter prospective captors. The retention of cultural traditions among other African peoples in The Bahamas can be viewed on a continuum,

extending from 'liberated Africans' deposited in the islands by the [British] Royal Navy to creoles with West African forebears who had largely adopted the habits and values of white colonists. Maroons, though also an adaptive people, would have been placed at the African end of that continuum. (Green 1996: 33; see also Herskovits 1958 [1941]: xxv)

Many of the Africans who would later become known as Black Seminoles were likely to have been fugitives from the plantations of Georgia and the Carolinas. In both of these territories, the population of African laborers often significantly outnumbered Europeans. The result was large enclaves of Africans who experienced little or no contact with European Americans during their tenure of enslavement in North America. Such was the case in the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, areas that long remained rich in African traditions and culture because the Africans there were isolated from mainstream European American culture (Twining and Baird 1991; Guthrie 1996). Other Africans arrived at the shores of the Sea Islands after having been transported from Barbadian and other West Indian plantations that had become overcrowded,

forcing the plantation owners to seek more profitable locales. Due to the nature of the plantations--most were populated by a high percentage of Africans--African culture was likely to have remained strong among this group.

Scholars who have investigated African cultural retentions in American culture have documented cultural survivals in many areas including folklore, songs, naming (Puckett 1926; Joyner 1984); technical skills, spirituality, music, religion, performing arts, poetry and dance (Woodson 1936; DuBois 1939; Levine 1977; Stuckey 1987); language (Turner 1949; Vass 1979; Abrahams and Szwed 1983); crafts, basketry, and folk art (Johnson 1940; Wood 1974; Thompson 1981, 1983); kinship, politics, economics, ethnicity (Whitten and Szwed 1970); agricultural techniques, food production and animal husbandry, boat building, hunting, and fishing (Wood 1974); as well as the strong influence of African culture on the "aesthetic, social and metaphysical traditions of North America" (Holloway 1990: xii).

The cultural traditions derived from their experiences from the plantations cultures of the Sea Islands of Georgia, the Carolinas and the West Indies, and those later acquired among the Seminoles of Florida, were subsequently reshaped by what the Black Seminoles encountered in the Bahamas. As Shaw aptly points out,

Ideas, symbols, and beliefs that inform understandings or meanings people share [i.e. culture] are validated, modified, and created in the process of social interaction. Racism, social stratification, and economic oppression that are a part of domestic colonialism are major social forces affecting

individuals who are carriers and creators of black culture. (Shaw 1995: 15)

It is important to consider how individual aspects of culture are differentially adapted or maintained i.e. the concept of "cultural focus," whereby particular aspects of culture carry differential stress or levels of importance (Herskovits 1938). Religion has played a critical role in most African cultures and is, in fact, inseparable from and integral to the events of everyday life-- indeed, in many African lexicons there is no word for 'religion. Therefore, it is reasonable that researchers would find a "high degree of retention of African religious elements in pure or reinterpreted form . . . (in) Afro-American cultures everywhere," and that this "could not be due to chance." (Herskovits 1958 [1941]: xxvi). Further, "in a situation of cultural contact where free choice is not allowed, they (the subordinate people in contact) retain elements of the focal aspects, either in unchanged or reinterpreted form, more tenaciously than those of other aspects" (Herskovits 1958 [1941]: xxvi). While many Africans did not have the ability to practice their religions in their original form, they developed modified versions, sometimes with outward expressions that mirrored those characteristic of Christianity, but that most often retained the underlying or 'deep structure' of the traditional African religions (such as Cuba--Santeria, Haiti--Vodun, Brazil--Candomble etc.). So while they could be considered 'new,' they were in actuality 'reinterpretations of the old.' Yai posits that

[i]n the Americas, Africans had to invent new institutions within which they could cultivate their customs, perpetuate the memory of Africa and thus live a meaningful life . . . religious institutions

like *Candomblé* in Brazil, *Santería* in Cuba, *Kumina* in Jamaica and the African-American church in the USA are prominent instances of such invented institutions. . . . The enslaved Africans used . . . free time gained through negotiation to reinvent time honored African institutions and practices with Christian garbs. (Yai 1996: 12)

As Herskovits asserted, "in Africa, as in the New World, the cultural processes that will be operative will be those of addition and synthesis to achieve congruence with older forms, rather than of subtraction and substitution, with their resulting fragmentations" (Herskovits 1958 [1941]: xxvii).

Mintz and Price critique the fact that most of the retentions Herskovits describes are

overt or explicit social and cultural forms such as 'patrilocality,' 'hoe culture,' 'corporate ownership of land,' and so forth. . . . An African cultural heritage widely shared by the people imported into any new colony, will have to be defined in less concrete terms, by focusing more on values, and less on sociocultural forms, and even by attempting to identify unconscious 'grammatical' principles, which may underlie and shape behavioral response . . . and, on the other, basic assumptions and expectations about the way the world functions phenomenologically (for instance, beliefs about causality, and how particular causes are revealed). (Mintz and Price 1976: 9-10)

Trouillot concurs that "[g]atekeeping or reification of the timelessness of 'native traits,' is impossible in the Caribbean because of its unique heterogeneity and historicity that defies simplistic theorization (Trouillot 1988: 22). These are important critiques because attempts to focus on specific retentions of cultural *traits* can be ambiguous and presumptive. While I agree with the contention of a need for focusing on phenomenological and ontological matters, I believe that connections between material culture, and sociocultural processes and forms are

also important to draw. I share this perspective with many scholars who have meticulously documented folklore, folkways and epistemologies among peoples of African descent in the New World (see Holloway 1990; Abrahams and Szwed 1983; DuBois 1939; Woodson 1968 [1936]; Whitten and Szwed 1970; Creel 1988 among others). They have provided excellent accounts of both material and ethereal Africanisms, “those elements of culture found in the New World that are traceable to an African origin” (Holloway 1990: ix).

I concur with Bascom that in some cases, where there were large aggregations of Africans the attribution of cultural traits to African origins was possible, but that

... among the Gullah in the coastal regions of South Carolina and Georgia, where the Negroes have been as isolated as anywhere in the United States, resemblances to specific African tribes are rare. For the most part the similarities are to those elements which are common to West Africa as a whole--to the common denominators of West African culture--and not to those aspects of culture which are distinctive to the tribes within that area. It is therefore extremely difficult to determine what particular African cultures have contributed to the present situation. (Bascom 1941: 43)

Cultural Retentions Among Black Seminole Descendants on Andros Island

John Goggin, an anthropologist from the University of Florida, spent five weeks on Andros Island, Bahamas in 1937, conducting an archaeological dig. While there, he met with “Indian Negroes” in the small settlement of Mastic Point on the island’s northeastern shore. One of the people he met there was Felix MacNeil, grandson of Scipio Bowlegs, reputed to have been a bush medicine doctor and leader of the group that came to Andros Island around

1821. Bowlegs and other refugees originally settled Red Bays, located on the northwestern coast of Andros Island (Goggin 1946). After his encounter with MacNeil, Goggin proclaimed that he had

positively identified the legendary Indians of Andros Island as Seminole Negroes. . . . The problem of the Seminole Negro was considered in some detail in order to determine the relative proportion of aboriginal traits present in their culture. It was thought that if the aboriginal elements were of any importance, these people would be an excellent field for a comparative study of acculturation. Unfortunately, only slight vestiges of Seminole culture are found on Andros Island. Certain traits are clearly recognizable as being Seminole, but as a whole the pattern is similar to their other Negro Bahamian groups. It is probable that in the original group of migrants there were only a few pure blood Seminoles. (Goggin 1946: 201)

MacNeil told Goggin that "the Indians brought log cabins--pole huts -- when they came to Red Bay. They also made "lean-to's of rock supported on beams" and they hunted with bows and arrows. "The arrows were pointed with brass tacks." (Journal entry, Goggin 1937). The historical use of bows and arrows was also mentioned to me by Rev. Bertram Newton in our 1996 interview:

Well in my early days I have seen the bow and arrows . . . where myself used to make them . . . and we often used to beat the tin on our arrows and shoot at certain objects . . .

Goggin never actually visited Red Bays but was "told that very few Indian customs remain" (Goggin 1946: 205). Goggin also mentions customs among Andros Islanders and Seminole Negroes that mirror those of Black Seminoles on the Texas-Mexican border, such as "settin-ups with the dead, with prayer, singing, food and drink. . . . These wakes [settin-ups] could be drawn

from a common African origin" (Porter 1945: 60). Porter alternately suggests that some customs may be of Indian origin and mentions the reported presence of "wild, bow-and arrow hunting, tree-dwelling people" in the interior of Andros as an example (Porter 1945: 60; see also Moseley 1926: 66).

My research, like Goggin's, did not reveal any significant number of cultural practices that can be attributed to a Seminole Indian origin. Two traditions in Red Bays did, however, strike me as possibly of Seminole origin. I witnessed these primarily in 'Marshall Town,' home of Red Bays' matriarch Mrs. Omelia Marshall and her extended family (see Chapter 6 for a discussion of Marshall Town). There the Marshall grand- and great-grandchildren grind corn using an antique hand grinder, and have ears of it decorating their house walls, demonstrating a reverence shared by Seminoles and other Native Americans for this particular food. In Marshall Town there is also a shelter that resembles a Seminole chickee. Mrs. Marshall explained that she had had a huge 'tatch camp,' as she calls it, consisting of a large number of these structures, and that there was only one left standing after the most recent hurricane. This type of chickee-like structure however, is common throughout The Bahamas and Florida, and is therefore not solely correlative to Black Seminole heritage. The manner of attaching palm fronds to the pole buildings also diverges from the Seminole tradition.

The strongest examples of cultural practices I observed among Red Bays residents were most likely adapted from African traditions. These include

elements of their speech and the significance they attach to the use of specific colors. If we consider the evidence from Littlefield (1977) about the origins of Africans imported into the Carolina rice-growing regions--the area from which I surmise many of the Africans who later became Black Seminoles escaped--Red Bayans' ancestors originally spoke various languages: *Mende* (Sierra Leone, Senegambia, Mali, Liberia, Cote D'Ivoire), *Vai* (Liberia), *Twi* (Ghana), *Fante* (Ghana), *Ga* (Ghana), *Ewe* (Ghana, Togo), *Yoruba* (Nigeria, Benin, Togo), *Ibo* (Nigeria), *Bini* (Nigeria), *Efik* (Nigeria) and a few others. A common feature of these languages is that [v] pronounced [w]. This same dialectical feature is prominent among Red Bayans, especially so among older people who consistently substitute [w] for [v] in words, such as "invited" [inwited] "very" [wery]. Also, "day clean," a phrase that enjoys wide usage primarily among elders in the Red Bays community, is an Anglicized version of the term for 'dawn' in several African languages (Yai 1998, personal communication). Additionally,

[t]he English inter-dental fricative does not exist in Gullah nor in the West African languages. . . . In pronouncing English words containing this sound, both the Gullah speaker and the West African substitute [d] and [t] respectively for the voiced and voiceless varieties of it . . . which he considers closer to the English *th* than any other sounds of his language (Turner 1949:245).

These linguistic features can be noticed among contemporary Gullah speakers in the Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands regions, as well as in the speech of their 'cousins,' the people of Red Bays. (Turner 1949). According to Turner, "Gullah is a creolized form of English revealing survivals from many of

the African languages spoken by the slaves who were brought to South Carolina and Georgia during the 18th century and the last half of the 19th century. These survivals are most numerous in the vocabulary of the dialect, but can be observed also in the sounds, syntax, morphology and intonation; and there are many striking similarities between Gullah and the African languages in the methods used to form words" (Turner 1949: v).

The significant usage of certain colors in Red Bays provides another example of a tradition possibly of African origin. The colors blue, white, red and black have significant meaning in some African traditional cultures. In fact, "color symbolism is a central aspect of Central and West African religious beliefs" (Stine, Cabak, & Groover 1996: 63), the regions from which most of the enslaved Africans originated. I observed the usage of these culturally significant colors on structures throughout the Red Bays community. This practice predominated among community elders including Mrs. Marshall, whose house is painted black with red shutters. Her eldest son and one of her daughters have painted their houses blue. Baptist minister Reverend Bertram A. Newton, my primary consultant, who is married to Mrs. Marshall's oldest daughter, has painted his house red and white; red, black, blue, and white are all colors that are reputed in many African cultures to "warn away spirits" (Wahlman 1993: 113).

In *Mules and Men*, Zora Neale Hurston noted the significance of the color blue, citing that blue candles, for example, provided protection and success.

Oral histories collected by Mills indicate "the importance of blue for protection and blessings in the Carolina Lowcountry" (quoted in Stine et al 1996: 64). Blue paint was, and still is, used "in South Carolina and Georgia [by African Americans who] sometimes paint the attic louvers, gables, doors, and window molding blue for protection from spirits and witches" (Stine et al 1996: 64).

During the Depression Era, a Folklore Project writer associated with the Federal Writer's Project reported that

[t]he color blue is a sure charm against both ghosts and lightning, the Sea Island Negroes hold. This is one reason why the doors and windows of almost every Negro cabin are painted bright blue . . . ghosts are afraid of this particular color because it reminds them of heaven. . . . They cannot face the sunlight, and neither can their eyes bear the sight of the color blue, for blue is the color of heavens. . . . Lightning too is an evil spirit. Holy blue has the power to divert it from harm, if the bolt should enter the cabin while the doors and windows are open and the blue charm is temporarily hidden. In fact the color blue is a charm against almost any kind of evil, for the Negroes like to think God himself prefers blue. (Folklore Project [1930s]: 1655, D-4-27A cited in Stine et al 1996: 64)

The window shutters of the original Baptist church in Red Bays (that has recently been razed) were painted blue, and several of the other houses in Marshall Town are painted blue.

Another African (perhaps also Seminole) tradition still widely practiced in Red Bays is the use of herbal or "bush" medicine for healing. According to Mitchell (1978), the men of the community specialized in healing illnesses of an "unnatural" kind; as conjurers they primarily treated symptoms of an occult or spiritual origin, but also practiced bush medicine (as did Scipio Bowlegs, one of

the original Black Seminole settlers and Mrs. Marshall's great grandfather). Women, on the other hand, were primarily herbalists. I was reminded of the gender differences in bush medicine 'specialization' when I received advice from a male about treatment of a sprained ankle while residing in Red Bays. When I complained that his remedy didn't help much, Mrs. Marshall scolded me that this man didn't know what he was talking about, and that I should have sought her help, instead, for the proper herbs to effect a cure.

The use of herbs and the practice of bush medicine were of course recontextualized by Africans in the New World due to differences in the availability of herbs in this new environment, and exposure to new ideas from the peoples with whom they came into contact (Groover & Baumann 1996). In testament to the hybrid nature of bush medicine, Groover and Baumann contend that

Although Africans and Europeans both maintained well developed traditional medical systems prior to inhabiting the New World, a portion of their subsequent botanical knowledge originated from Native Americans. (Groover and Baumann 1996: 26)

Many of the herbal remedies in use in contemporary Red Bays are likely to have been influenced by their long association with the Seminole Indians, especially since the environment of Andros Island resembles that of Florida and therefore would have been conducive to the growth of similar species of flora.

Value systems traditional to Africans and Native Americans were also evident in the community of Red Bays. For example, I observed cooperative work practices--labor exchanges--on many occasions. The Yoruba tradition of

owe entails the wife preparing food and 'spirits'--palmwine and gin--for workers engaged in cooperative projects on behalf of her family (Bascom 1941). Just such a situation occurred in Red Bays when pole buildings on the recreation grounds across from the primary school required thatching for an upcoming event. The wife of one of the workers supplied gin and beer for the workers who cut several truckloads of thatch and later attached it to the bare structures.

Cooperative work, however, is also a tradition in European culture, demonstrated by activities such as house-raisings, quilting bees, and neighborliness. Therefore, the ability to clearly discern distinctive European, African and Seminole cultural traits is difficult. Bascom contends that this is because "it is now recognized that the differences in the general pattern of cultures of Africa and Europe were not great; in fact their fundamental similarity justifies the concept of an Old World Area which includes both Europe and Africa" (Bascom 1941: 43).

Another factor that hinders the direct attribution of cultural traits is that Africans who arrived with the Loyalists (coming from the Carolina Sea Islands area in North America, the Mosquito Coast of Latin America, and the Caribbean) were relocated throughout the Bahamas. Therefore, some of the cultural retentions found among Red Bayans are also found elsewhere in the Bahamas, especially among those who trace their roots to the Loyalist and Black Seminole migrations.

CHAPTER 5

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: SEMINOLES AND AFRICANS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

In Truth, sacred bonds between blacks and Native Americans, bonds of blood and metaphysical kinship, cannot be documented solely by factual evidence confirming extensive interaction and intermingling--they are also matters of the heart. These ties are best addressed by those who are not simply concerned with the cold data of history, but who have "history written in the hearts of our people" who then feel for history, not just because it offers facts but because it awakens and sustains connections, renews and nourishes current relations. Before that which is in our hearts can be spoken, remembered with passion and love, we must discuss the myriad ways white supremacy works to impose forgetfulness, creating estrangement between red and black peoples, who though different lived as One. (bell hooks 1992)

The historical record of the New World suffers from the chronic malaise of "structural amnesia." This term refers to a Eurocentric process by which "those events which have little relevance to the structure of . . . white society are relegated to historical oblivion" (Hudson 1971:1). The process is conspicuous by the manner in which events are selectively rendered to print, and are consistently presented from the vantage point of interactions between Europeans and "others." References to relationships between Native Americans and Africans in the Americas--peoples who fall into the Europeans' category of "others"--have been systematically avoided or relegated to an obscure footnote in the American historical record (Forbes 1993; Woodson 1920). Both Native Americans and Africans were confronted with similar complexes of European

domination, racism and oppression in the Americas. The relative neglect of attention to the dynamic of contact between these subordinated peoples not only creates an impression of their impotency as agents in the genesis of New World societies, but it perpetuates the notion of ascendant European society and culture. As Katz observes "those who assume that a people have no history worth mentioning are likely to believe that they have no humanity worth defending. . . . Denying a people's heritage questions their legitimacy" (Katz 1986: 10).

An "Other" Perspective

Schizophrenic images of both Native Americans and Africans were constructed as a means to legitimate their assigned status of "other." Native Americans were alternately romanticized as noble savages or dehumanized as murderous beasts. What limited history does exist for them essentially begins after the majority removed to Indian Territory in the West in the 1830s, and neglects to mention their presence in the Americas for thousands of years before the Europeans arrived (see Kersey 1987; Fairbanks 1973). Likewise, Africans were conceived of as child-like and docile--slavery was a paternalistic measure--or, conversely, as a savage, capricious, sub-human species. The "sambo" paradigm, based upon this premise, has served to negatively influence the view of African Americans for almost three decades (see Elkins 1974). From a Eurocentric perspective, Africans bore no resemblance to the intellectually, socially, technologically and morally superior Europeans whose demeanor was strictly governed by laws and reason (see Linnaeus 1758 [1736]). Both Native

Americans and Africans were depicted as "part of the natural landscape" (Hudson 1971: 89) in most accounts of southern United States history. Such characterizations of "naturalism" promoted a reductionist argument whereby "nature denotes the pre-cultural, primitive, uncultivated . . . sub-human, [i.e.] what remains when the peculiar qualities of sapiens the sentient, cultural and technological are omitted" (Blakey 1991: 15). Colonial legislation formally codified the subordination of Native Americans and Africans via Indian laws and slave codes, designed to create "a juridical space for non-Europeans as a separate category of beings" (Mills 1997: 26).

Discrimination between "self" and "other" is a fundamental human preoccupation. Various layers of identity--e.g., language, gender, ethnicity, race--are constructed via the encounter between "self" and "other." In the contemporary world, "difference" is often construed in strictly biological or racial terms, rather than, more appropriately, attributing it to culture. Although many anthropologists are finally ending a prolonged reticence in discussions about the unscientific bases of racial categorization¹--a discourse that figured prominently in the discipline during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (promoted by scholars such as Franz Boas and W.E.B. DuBois), but since that time largely relegated to the periphery--years of propaganda to the contrary has resulted in an entrenched social construction of race that will be difficult, at best, to deconstruct.

¹The American Anthropological Association has tentatively adopted an official statement of its position on "race" (Anthropology Newsletter 1998: 1.3).

In ancient times, discrimination was not so much based upon color prejudice as on perceived cultural differences. According to Snowden,

... the Egyptians distinguished between themselves, "the people," and outsiders; and the Greeks called foreign cultures barbarian. Yet nothing comparable to the virulent color prejudice of modern times existed in the ancient world. (Snowden 1983: 63)

Derogatory references to Africans were first espoused, according to Drake (1990), by early Christian, Judaic and Islamic religious authorities. Drake suggests that "negative prejudices against sub-Saharan Africans--'Negroes'--antedated the rise of mercantile capitalism and the modern expansion of Europe overseas" (Drake 1990: xvi) and, further, that these conceptions varied situationally, depending upon the social domain in which they occurred, i.e., aesthetic, erotic, religious/mystical or status-allocating. Negative ideations and emotions in the minds and hearts of Europeans surrounding black people and dark skin crescendoed as their conquest of the New World expanded. European views of Africans as "others" in the New World--and concomitant prejudices and discriminatory actions directed toward them--diverged, according to some scholars, based upon three variables: familiarity, religion, and economics (Hoetink 1967; Jordan 1990).

(1) Familiarity: Because the Spanish and Portuguese had had early experiences of contact with North Africa--indeed both had been previously conquered and ruled by Africans with more advanced civilizations than they--the impact of skin color was not as great on them as on Englishmen (Jordan 1990). Hoetink (1967) concurs with this, citing the Spaniard's familiarity with other cultures as an advantage over the British who lacked cross-cultural

experiences. These arguments, however, do not consider that the earlier exposure of Spaniards and Portuguese to Africans, exposure wherein they occupied a subordinate position, may have negatively predisposed them during their subsequent contact in a different context.

(2) Religion: Roman Catholicism, prevalent in Spain and Portugal, ostensibly embraced all people and regarded the enslaved as authentically human and capable of salvation (Hoetink 1967). Therefore, this rationale maintains, persons enslaved by them received more humane treatment. What this argument discounts, however, is the brutality of the Catholic church toward 15th and 16th century Jews and Muslims, as well as Spanish and Portuguese hostility toward the Moors (Feagin and Feagin 1999: 486).

English Protestantism, on the other hand, promoted racialism, non-involvement, segregation and a belief in the irredeemability of the savages (Hoetink 1967). A stringently restrictive binary racial system was adopted, based upon the principle of hypodescent, that dictated societal status and mobility. Skin color was the sole determinant of a person's fate in English colonies. Unlike Brazil and Cuba,² there was no class differentiation, based upon wealth, education, ancestry and political power, in the British colonies and the United States. Some favoritism, however, was afforded there to lighter-skinned African Americans who were often the children of slaveowners

²The inclusion of Cuba in the category of Spanish colonies where there was, ostensibly, a racial continuum was convincingly challenged by Helg in "Race and Black Mobilization in Colonial and Early Independent Cuba: A Comparative Perspective" in *Ethnohistory* 44:1 Winter 1997.

(Hudson 1971: 138). After the American Civil War and Reconstruction, they had greater access to occupations, such as farming, barbering, catering and skilled trades and, therefore, achieved heightened socio-economic status (Hudson 1971: 139).

(3) Economics: Comparatively similar scenarios of enslavement ensued in regions with similar types of plantation economies, irrespective of cultural (i.e. religion, language, exposure) differences (Williams 1957). According to this argument, English colonies were organized as commercial companies that thrived on the absentee plantation owner's exploitation of human and natural resources; whereas in most of the Spanish colonies, plantation owners considered themselves permanent 'settlers' and were, therefore, more involved with the management and perpetuation of their resources. This divergent relationship to the land and the enslaved peoples generated very different attitudes and behavior between most English and Spanish colonists.

Clearly, the major objective of the Europeans who descended upon the Americas was to make a profit. The distinction between how the English, Spanish and Portuguese colonizers achieved this objective is, pragmatically, a dynamic continuum of domination and oppression. The contention that millions of Native Americans and Africans perished as a consequence of the European colonialization of the "New World" is virtually undisputed. Demographic estimates indicate that there were 80 million indigenous Americans alive in 1492--the time of Columbus' arrival--and only 10 million remaining one century later. In North America the population, estimated at 15 million in 1492, was

reduced to 250,000 by 1890 (Feagin and Feagin 1999: 198). Native Americans were summarily exterminated; genocidal racism was initially justified under the rubrics of territorial expansion and racial superiority, and later under the doctrine of "Manifest Destiny." Their demise was effected by various means, including overwork, genocide and exposure (intentional or inadvertent) to epidemic and epizootic diseases. A key reason why Native Americans proved to be an unreliable labor source was their familiarity with the environment; being on "home turf" allowed them to more successfully resist enslavement in North America. Many of those who escaped, however, were re-captured and exported to the West Indies for enslavement there. The colonial assembly outlawed the enslavement of Native Americans in 1679. Africans became the one remaining source of cheap labor that was in abundant supply (Higginbotham 1978: 116).

The exact number of Africans transported during the Atlantic slave trade is impossible to accurately determine. Estimates range from 2 to 20 million, 80 percent of whom arrived between 1701-1850 (Curtin 1994). The number of 'arrivals' does not contemplate the number of Africans who succumbed during the treacherous Middle Passage as a consequence of inhumane slave shipboard conditions, rebellions and suicides. Estimates are that 30,000 Africans had been enslaved in North America by 1715 (Robinson 1971). Over the next century, this number rose to over 1/2 million, peaking between 1780 and 1810. The network of powerful people who sanctioned and profited from this trade included: clergymen who blessed it; the British Crown and their colonial agents in Boston and Williamsburg; ethnic group leaders in Africa; merchants in Newport, Rhode

Island and Liverpool, England; Charleston traders; Virginia planters; lawyers and judges; and agents who insured the 'cargoes' during the Middle Passage (Robinson 1971).

The colonial legislature made periodic attempts to limit the slave trade. Occasionally motivated by moral qualms, they more often acted out of their fear of slave revolts. The threat of revolts grew as the ratio of Africans to European Americans became too great in some areas of the country, as was the case in the Carolinas.

The colony of Carolina was established in the 1660s, primarily by Barbadian plantation owners, who transported enslaved Africans and their system of slavery from the Caribbean. These original settlers made no pretense about their motivations; African enslavement was integral to their development plans for the colony. By 1720, 70 percent of the population of Carolina was Africans and their American-born descendants; the highest number were located in the southern part of the colony (Littlefield 1981). This drastic imbalance between the number of Africans and Europeans aroused deep concern and fear among colonists. Carolina separated into two states--North and South Carolina--in 1729; by 1790 the African/European ratio was reduced to 50 percent through limitations imposed on the importation of Africans and increased recruitment of white settlers to the area. However, when importation restrictions threatened profits and status, that were intimately tied to the perpetuation of slavery and the slave trade, the Crown intervened and the trade resumed.

South Carolina's semi-tropical climate was conducive to the production of the most profitable crops grown in North America--cotton and rice. Rice, however, was destined to become the foundation of colonial South Carolina's economy. Bound African labor in the South Carolina low-country--recruited from specific areas of Africa for their technological expertise in rice cultivation³--generated substantial profits, affording plantation owners the highest per capita income in the colonies by the mid-18th century. The influence of this powerful rice aristocracy helped precipitate the Civil War (Joyner 1984).

Paradoxically, the 'founders' waxed eloquent about their abhorrence of slavery, and drafted the Constitution promoting equality and liberty, yet were slaveowners themselves. How ironic that they should protest their treatment by Britain as tantamount to slavery while at the same time imposing that literal state of human bondage on so many Africans. This central paradox--the necessity of maintaining a balance between increased freedom for some and increased oppression for others--emanates from the phenomenon of slavery and the requirements of capitalism in the United States (see Patterson 1991, Shanklin 1994).

³Africans from the rice-growing regions of West Africa were highly valued and favored by South Carolinian planters. Despite a preference for Senegambians (from the area now known as Ghana), South Carolinian planters eventually imported greater numbers of Africans from Angola due to their increased availability. From 1735 to 1740, approximately 70 percent of South Carolina's slave labor emanated from the Congo and Angola regions (Littlefield 1981).

Race and Color Consciousness

In many of the former Spanish and Portuguese colonies vociferous denials of the importance of race as a factor in personal life opportunities persist even today. Race is frequently treated as an epiphenomenon of class and ethnic differences. While ethnic and class differences do act in concert with skin color in determining race in Latin America (Safa 1998), denial of the importance of race and subscription to "the myth of racial equality and a raceless nation" (de la Fuente 1998: 47, see also Twine 1997) figure intimately in the complex web of racist discourse.

The influences of globalization and large scale immigration to the United States and Great Britain have caused phenotype to become a decidedly more dominant factor among members of these societies at home and abroad. Racial and ethnic identities are fluid, and are situationally reconstructed at home and abroad (see Foner 1998: 174).

Extensive taxonomies based upon skin color (regardless of actual ancestry), prevalent in former Spanish and Portuguese colonies, are portrayed as examples of an 'anti-racist' stance, a class reductionist position purportedly superior to the Black-White binary racial paradigm extant in the former British colonies, the United States and the United Kingdom. In *Patterns of Race in the Americas* (1964), Marvin Harris contends that the flexible racial classifications in

many former Spanish colonies, Brazil in particular, inhibit racial discrimination.⁴ Countering Harris, Glazier argues that “[t]here is no necessary connection between the complexity of a taxonomic system and its use, and in my experience, people who make complex ethnic and racial distinctions are able to discriminate just as effectively as those who do not” (Glazier 1985: 95; see also Harrison 1995). The myth of racial democracy in many of the former Spanish and Portuguese colonies is slowly being dispelled (Lovell and Wood 1998: 90). Paradoxically, the battle against the reality of pervasive racism in Brazil, a former Portuguese colony, has “failed to generate grassroots support among nonelites,” i.e., the darker skinned peoples (Twine 1997: 4).

Early Contacts of Africans and Native Americans

Despite Europeans’ attribution of an inherently inferior intellectual status to Africans and Native Americans, it is feasible that they possessed the prerequisite technology to contact one another as early as eleven thousand years ago (Greenman 1963). The first documented account of a Native American crossing the Atlantic ocean occurred during the Middle Ages on the Iberian peninsula when:

... there arrived one day in the coast of Spain a man “red and strange” in a craft described as a hollowed tree. From the recorded description, which specifically states that he was not a Negro, he

⁴For example, Brazilian vocabulary includes 125 words used as racial identifiers, e.g., *preto*, meaning “black,” refers to a person of all or mostly African ancestry; a person who is racially mixed would be called a *moreno*, and depending upon the skin tone, *morenos* are further divided into *morenos claros* (light skinned) and *morenos escuros* (dark skinned); *mulatto* refers to a person of mixed Caucasian and African descent, etc. (Feagin and Feagin 1999: 487).

might well have been a native of America in a *piragua*--a dugout canoe . . . the unfortunate man, ill and enfeebled, died before he had been taught to make himself understood. (Merrien 1958)

Similarly, Bartolome de las Casas recalls in *Historia de las Indias* that before 1492 rafts, canoes (*almadias*) and other debris reached the shores of the Azores (Forbes 1993: 8,9; see also Hudson 1971: 9). Native Americans reached Europe and Africa via the Gulf Stream, that flows north from the Caribbean, then northeasterly from Florida to Newfoundland, winding east toward the British Isles, then southwards to the Iberian peninsula and the Canary islands, where it finally heads westward back to the Americas. Columbus reported that near Trinidad, he found the natives wearing scarves or sashes that were identical to those of Sierra Leone and others that were similar to Moorish sashes (Forbes 1993: 14).

The ancient Olmec stone heads of Mexico are cited as material evidence of early contact between Native Americans and Africans (Van Sertima 1976); this time, apparently, the Africans sailed the Gulfstream to the Americas. This is disputed, however, by Haslip-Viera et al. (1997) as a "cultural nationalist" or "Afrocentric" argument that lacks any foundation in fact and that, further, denies the agency of Native Americans. What Haslip-Viera et al. fail to acknowledge is the empirical evidence from physical anthropology, as well as language and artifacts, that clearly demonstrates the multiple origins of American culture. Their argument is substantially a thinly-veiled, though eloquently presented, attempt to distance themselves from an African heritage.

Foster's (1935) pioneering work details "Negro-Indian Relationships" in Latin, South and North America, and focuses on encounters in the Southeastern United States. Contact between the two groups in Latin America is apparent from the peoples found in the region who are mixed-blood to varying degrees: *Ladinos* (Guatemala), *Caribs* (Nicaragua), *Zambos* or *Zambaigos* (Peru, Venezuela, Paraguay, Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil, Guyana and Surinam) (Foster 1935: 9-11, see also Forbes 1993). Demographic disequilibrium--3 times as many men were imported from Africa as women--resulted in considerable intermixtures of Native American women with African men throughout the Americas (Forbes 1993).

The first landing of Africans on the shores of North America was not in 1619 at Plymouth Rock, as is popularly believed. Rather, "in distant South Carolina forests, two and one-half centuries before the Declaration of Independence, two dark skinned peoples first lit the fires of freedom and exalted its principles" (Katz 1986: 25). It was in 1526 that the first Africans arrived with Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon, a Spanish official from Hispaniola. Ayllon came to establish a colony in the area now known as South Carolina. This region had been scouted some years before; Native Americans had been kidnapped and taken to Hispaniola where they were enslaved. When the Spaniards returned to South Carolina the Indians fled inland, noting that these were same men who had taken away their people; they had returned this time with Africans in chains. The order for Africans to begin building homes marked the advent of

slavery in the United States. Ravaged by disease, the population of this new Spanish colony dwindled; Ayllon died less than a year after arrival. One month after his death, Africans and Native Americans conspired to set fires and cause other disturbances that forced the few remaining Spaniards to flee back to Hispaniola. They would not return for 25 years (Katz 1986). This marked the beginning of African and Native American alliance in the cause of their mutual freedom. The community they established there is testament, according to Katz that

... our vaunted democracy did not march into the wilderness with buckled shoes and British accents. Rather it was dancing around fireplaces in South Carolina wrapped in dried animal skins and singing African and native songs before the British arrived. This dark democracy lived in family groups before London companies sent out settlers with muskets, Bibles, and concepts of private property. (Katz 1986: 25)

The nature of contacts and subsequent relationships formed between Africans and Native Americans varied widely inter- and intra-regionally. Not all of their encounters were friendly; Africans could be exploitative in their behavior toward the Native Americans, as occurred in Peru (Forbes 1993: 61), and Native Americans (e.g., Cherokee) could be as harsh as Europeans in their perpetration of chattel slavery upon Africans. In many cases, however, Native Americans and Africans collaborated against their common oppressor in the Americas. The nexus of Seminoles and Africans in Florida reveals a unique relationship, unparalleled by those formed between other Native American nations and Africans, a relationship that essentially has been ignored in most

traditional historical accounts of the southeastern United States. The "Five Civilized Tribes"--a designation assigned by Europeans based upon the comparatively cooperative relationships they established with these groups as opposed to other Native American nations--were the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles (see Swanton 1946). With the exception of the Seminoles, all of these nations became large slaveholders as early as 1748. The forms of slavery practiced among the nations can be ranked hierarchically: the Cherokees closely followed the tradition of chattel slavery, as they were the most acculturated of all the tribes; the Chickasaws and Choctaws were noted both for their cruelty to the enslaved and as "great sticklers for racial purity" (Porter 1971: 44). The Creeks, ranked as less civilized than the nations, had a more "patriarchal" attitude toward the enslaved. Nowhere, however, were Africans better received than with the Seminoles, among whom they lived in relative freedom in Florida (Porter 1971).

The Etymology of "Seminole"

Various assertions have been made about the derivation of "Seminole." One claim is that the term was first used by Creeks when referring to "Afro-American runaways" (Franco 1968: 93; see also Guillot 1961: 38) who had escaped enslavement in Georgia and the Carolinas, and who subsequently settled in Florida. In the Creek language "Seminole" means "runaways" (Giddings 1858: 3). Others concur that "Seminole" means "wild" or "runaway," but argue instead that the name applies to Creeks who abandoned their

territories in Alabama and Georgia and settled in Florida (Katz 1986, Littlefield 1977). "Seminole" is further speculated to be an adaptation from the Spanish *cimarron* meaning "wild one," that originally referred to domestic cattle that had taken to the hills in Hispaniola (Parry and Sherlock 1965: 14). Later on, it was associated with Native American slaves who had escaped from the Spaniards as well (Franco 1968: 92). Sturtevant (1971:110) suggests that the meaning of "Seminole" evolved into use as

. . . the ethnonym for all Florida Indians; and it was the specific ethnonym for the band derived ultimately from Alachua, as opposed to other bands called Mikasuki, Creek, Tallahassee, Yuchi, Hitchiti, Spanish Indians.

Littlefield (1977) concurs with this point, asserting that "Seminole" was used in the 1770s to refer to the Alachua band of Lower Creeks and that by the 1820s the term referred to Lower and Upper Creeks and Yuchis who had migrated to and settled in Florida.

Wright (1986) claims that some Creeks distinguished themselves as Seminoles before coming to Florida. However, it is widely held that use of the designation "Seminole" commenced only when members of the Lower and Upper Creeks (as well as remnants of other groups) left the settled Creek towns in Alabama and Georgia and migrated to Florida in the 18th and early 19th centuries. It is this convention of meaning that I employ in this study.

Native Americans and Africans in the Southeastern United States

Northern Florida's growth stemmed from intermittent waves of Creek and other Native American emigrants. Beginning in the 17th century, migrating

Creeks encountered several indigenous groups: the Apalachee in the west; the Timucua in the north; the Calusa in the south. These indigenous Floridian populations had been decimated by diseases imported by Europeans and by slaving raids from Carolinians, that commenced around 1702 (Littlefield 1977). Cowkeeper's Oconee band of Seminoles settled in the Alachua region after of the Yamassee War.⁵ The Creek War of 1813-1814 precipitated the final significant migration that effectively doubled the Native American population in Florida (Littlefield 1977).

Extensive contact among the Seminoles, French, British and Spanish occurred in Florida as these international actors vied for favored status with the Seminoles in order to secure land or gain influence. The Europeans' persuasive arsenal included conferring dubious honors upon Native American leaders, such as, European titles and military commissions (Hudson 1971: 121).

Alliances between Africans and Native Americans were the source of great fear among Europeans who fiercely sought to prevent them, unless these alliances were to their advantage as was the case when the Spanish needed them as a buffer zone against European Americans invading Florida. In order to effect divisiveness, European Americans fanned the flames of animosity by: (1)

⁵The Yamassee War, instigated by Lower Creeks against the Carolina traders, was fought from 1715 to 1716. The Yamassees were virtually destroyed; many were sold into slavery in Jamaica and New England, their towns removed to Guala (an area along the Georgia coast from the Savannah River to St. Andrews Sound), and Florida.

paying Native Americans to recapture Africans;⁶ (2) arming slaves and setting them to attack Native American villages, often under false pretenses; and (3) inciting Native Americans by blaming Africans for epidemics (actually perpetrated by Europeans) that ravaged many Native American villages. European attempts to divide and conquer met with mixed success.

Labor Needs on the New Frontier

The taming of the "New World" frontier required a substantial amount of labor, more than the colonists--many of whom were aristocrats--were capable of or inclined to perform themselves. The serious need for labor did not, however, induce the colonists to enslave other Europeans; indentured servitude with a specific term limitation of four to seven years was the closest European immigrants ever came to bondage. Another status of the European immigrant laborer, usually Germans or Swiss, was

A redemptioner, unlike an indentured servant, was often able to pay a part of the cost of passage [to the United States]. Merchants took whatever money the redemptioner had and provided him and his family with passage aboard ship and a contract to deliver them to America. The redemptioner was usually allowed fourteen days to try to secure the balance due; if he could not, he was sold into indentured servitude for a length of time roughly equivalent to the amount of money due the captain. (Higginbotham 1978: 394-395)
Other immigrants included women and men who chose the option of

indentured servitude over imprisonment or death sentences in England (Higginbotham 1978). Among them were victims of unscrupulous ship owners

⁶They were paid very well for this: one musket and three blankets for the return of one fugitive slave (one musket alone would normally cost 35 deerskins, which would usually take several months of hunting to acquire) (Hudson 1971: 36).

who conspired with judges to convict innocent people, then sell them into indentureships, a process whereby

... a whole hierarchy from courtly secretaries and grave judges down to the jailers and turnkeys, insisted on having a share in the spoils. . . . The leading merchants and public officials were all involved in the practice. (Williams 1944: 14)

The colonial period was a "Golden Era" for European Americans, property-owning ones that is. Poor Europeans, often indentured servants, joined Africans and Native Americans in their exclusion from the Constitution's pronouncement that "all men are created equal." Virginia colonists used the appellation "servants" to describe the first Africans in North America who, initially, were subjected to indenture, much the same as European immigrants.

Conniff and Davis however, dispute their status observing that

English-language usage in the 1600s conceived of slave as a category of servant. So the use of the word 'servant' in documents such as the Virginia censuses of 1623 and 1624 in no way denied the slave status of Africans . . . [who] had no contracts for service, and for sure they had not entered service voluntarily. . . . An indentured servants contract and, thus, labor was salable, but the person was not. Slavery was heritable, and no other personal labor obligation was. No others were marked from birth as unfree labor. (Conniff and Davis 1994: 127)

Heritability was matrilineal so regardless of what the status of the father was, a person became enslaved if his or her mother was enslaved (Conniff and Davis 1994: 127).

In addition to resolving the colonists' labor problems, the institution of slavery served as a social barometer. Planters--the elite class of Europeans--found it advantageous to maintain the low status of Blacks in order to placate

lower-class Europeans. This led the invention of the concept of a "White race" (Feagin and Feagin 1999: 82). Construction of this new identity "provide[d] racial privileges for propertyless European American immigrants and prevent[ed] the latter from bonding with Americans of color" (Feagin and Feagin 1999: 83). Lower wages and socio-economic status were augmented by the "public and psychological wage" associated with whiteness (Feagin and Feagin 1999: 83). DuBois asserts that their contentment attenuated as European American immigrants "realized that Negroes were part of a group of millions of workers who were enslaved by law, and whose competition kept white labor out of the work of the South and threatened its wages and stability in the North" (1962 [1935]: 19). Maintenance of European American hegemony required elevating slavery from a *de facto* to a *de jure* institution. The institutionalization of African bondage laid the foundation of the American economy, both in the North and the South.

Escape Routes: Georgia and The Carolinas

Proximity to Florida, familiarity with the environment and the fact that large areas of the southeastern United States were as yet unsettled, provided ripe conditions for escape from Georgian and Carolinian plantations. Additionally, a state of confusion that ensued during the French and American Revolutions provided a fortuitous diversion that facilitated their flight (Landers 1996). An invitation from the Spanish also served as a beacon to freedom.

A 1693 Royal Spanish decree promised protection to all enslaved Africans who fled to St. Augustine and adopted the Catholic religion. Africans who had been enslaved on the plantations of the southeastern United States, especially those from the contiguous states of the Carolinas and Georgia, eagerly sought their freedom in Spanish Florida

The Spanish granted newly-freed Africans plots of land two miles north of St. Augustine where they established the homestead known as *Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose*.⁷ The motives for this invitation from Spanish officials were not as altruistic as has often been imputed. Greater than their concern for the souls of these poor Africans, or respect for their humanity, was the Spaniards' urgent need for them as "buffers" against invasions by United States residents and troops. Africans and Seminoles fought together, but for different reasons; Seminole Indians fought to retain their land and livelihood, while Africans fought against a return to that "peculiar institution," or death at the hands of bounty hunting Coweta Indians and angry slaveowners wishing to make an example of them. Slave owners also hired paterollers, men who were paid to recapture Africans and return them to their masters; paterollers

... were particularly active during the period when the war between the states took many of the active masters away from their

⁷Landers has done extensive research in this area. She (1996: 94) mentions two names of free Blacks, Abraham McQueen and Sequi, who filed claims against the US government for damages incurred as a result of the Patriot War of 1812. These names can be found among the roster listing 97 "foreign Negro slaves" (Woods 1980: 9) who were discovered to be living in Red Bays, Andros Island, Bahamas in 1828.

plantations. . . . Much of the fear that the slaves held for the 'paterollers' was due to the fact that in most cases they were accustomed to administer something of a beating to the slave before returning him to his owner. The fact that owners paid the 'paterollers' for these returned slaves may have added a certain zest to the beatings; at any rate, they were among the most dread factors the escaping slave had to take into consideration. (Richardson 1936-1941: 17)

European Americans were especially incensed about Africans living among the Seminoles because the Seminole system of slavery was reputedly more like tenant farming than chattel slavery. Black Seminoles frequently established their own villages adjacent to the Seminole communities, and were permitted to live autonomously in exchange for payment of a percentage of their harvest to the Seminole chief. They became increasingly indispensable to the Seminoles; many were multilingual, fluent in Native American languages as well as English. Ironically, they were sometimes used as interpreters, negotiating slave ownership disputes between Seminoles and European Americans.⁸ In the 1820s, an estimated 400 Africans lived among the Seminoles and appeared "wholly independent, or at least regardless of the authority of their masters; and are slaves but in name . . ." (Humphreys 1826: 66). In 1826 Governor DuVal admonished the Seminoles:

⁸Two of the most prominent Black interpreters were Abraham and Cudjo. Abraham is described as "plausible, pliant and deceitful", having a great deal of influence over the Indian nation. "With an appearance of great modesty, he is ambitious, avaricious and, withal very intelligent" (Klos 1989: 69). Cudjo, on the other hand, was a regular interpreter at the Seminole agency. He sided with the government at Removal time. He was partially paralyzed and needed medical attention that was available only from the whites (Klos 1989: 69-70).

You are not to mind what the Negroes say: they will lie and lead you astray, in the hope to escape from their white owners, and that you will give them refuge and hide them. Do your duty and give them up. They care nothing for you, further than to make use of you, to keep out of the hands of their masters. . . . Deliver them up, rid your nation of a serious pest, and do what, as honest men, you should not hesitate to do; then your white brothers will say you have done them justice, like honest, good men. (Klos 1989: 60)

The displacement and relocation of the Seminoles in Florida had much to do with their possession of "black slaves" (Klos 1989: 55). Along with removal the Native Americans from the coveted land, a major objective of the Americans was to eliminate the sanctuary that Florida afforded to runaways.

Maroon Communities

An important distinction can be made regarding maroon communities in the New World. While the majority were forged by African and creole runaways (who sometimes fought against Native Americans as well as Europeans), others were formed with Africans and Native Americans, allied in their resistance of European domination and oppression (Craton 1982). The latter case was what occurred in Florida with the Seminoles and the Africans who were fleeing enslavement on the plantations of Georgia and the Carolinas.

Persistent forays into Florida by United States militias destroyed Seminole and Black Seminole settlements and forced their relocation to other areas of the state that could provide increased security. They sought refuge in less accessible areas, such as swamps and hammocks. These sites resembled the pattern of traditional maroon communities that always staked out the most formidable

environments available (e.g., Jamaicans in the Blue Mountains, Bush Negroes and Saramaka in the jungles of Guyana and Surinam respectively).⁹

Africans settled either in Seminole villages or built separate communities in the vicinity of their Seminole allies (Wright 1986). It is speculated that they may have desired separate settlements because "the Black Seminoles were emerging as a distinct people at this time and . . . were developing their own unique culture" (Herron 1994: 38).

United States Army Major George McCall recorded the following account (1826) of a visit to the Black Seminole town of Pilaklikaha, situated twelve miles south of Okahumpka, the town that Micanopy established after the 1813 destruction of his Alachua settlements:

On the third day we reached "*Pelahlikaha*" --in English, "Many Ponds." In the midst of these ponds, on a ridge of high "shell-hummock" land . . . there now flourishes one of the most prosperous Negro towns in the Indian territory. We found the Negroes in possession of large fields of the finest land, producing large crops of corn, beans, melons, pumpkins and other esculent vegetables. They are chiefly runaway slaves from Georgia, who have put themselves under the protection of Micanopy . . . to whom, for this consideration, they render a tribute of one-third of the produce of the land, and one-third of the horse, cattle and fowls they may raise. Otherwise they are free to come and go at pleasure, and in some cases are elevated to the position of equality with their masters. I saw while riding along the borders of the ponds fine rice growing; and in the village large corn-cribs well filled, while the houses were larger and more comfortable than those of the Indians themselves. The three principal men bear the

⁹These settlements in South America claimed some very intriguing names e.g., "God Knows Me and None Else," "Disturb Me If You Dare", and "Come Try Me If You Be Men," and "I Shall Moulder Before I Shall Be Taken" (Katz 1986: 40; also see Price 1979).

distinguished names of July, August and Abram. We found these me to be shrewd, intelligent fellows, and to the highest degree of obsequious (In Herron 1994: 40-41).

An archaeological survey of the reputed site of Pilaklikaha in Sumpter County collected materials indicating that the site was occupied from 1813 to 1836, and that it was almost certainly a Black Seminole site because the artifacts collected are very different from those found at typical Seminole Indian sites for this same period (Herron 1994: 70). Additional Black Seminole settlements include King Heijah's (also known as Koe Hadjo's) Town, Boggy (Kettle) Island (associated with Alachua Seminole, Sitarkey), and other "Negro Towns" located in the vicinity of Bowleg's Town along the Suwanee River (Mykel 1962; Herron 1992).

Aptheker describes marronage, a persistent feature of the ante-bellum South, as the expression of resistance on the part of the "outraged victims" of American slavery (Aptheker 1979: 151,165). Various manifestations of resistance were daily occurrences on plantations. *Petit marronage*--characterized as "repetitive or periodic truancy with temporary goals such as visiting a relative or a lover on a neighboring plantation"--was tolerated (Price 1979: 3). It was *marronage* on a large scale--such as occurred in Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Hispaniola, Jamaica, Mexico, and Surinam--that drew the ire of plantation owners.

Maroon communities were often ignored until the level of their activities became worrisome to the "slavocracy" (Aptheker 1979). When maroon activities

reached an intolerable point (raiding, plundering, murder) laws were enacted in several states. In some cases Native Americans were enlisted to recapture Africans and return them to their "owners." Africans, too were implicated in the return of their own people. In some cases, Europeans had no other choice than to make treaties with the maroons, recognize "their territorial integrity, [and make] some provision for meeting their economic needs, demanding in return an agreement to end all hostilities toward the plantations, to return all future runaways and, often, to aid the whites in hunting them down" (Aptheker (1979: 4). Fifty or more of these communities existed from 1672-1864 in the less-accessible areas of South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama.¹⁰ The terrain of these states offered relatively good hiding places in mountainous areas, swamps and forests, but not nearly as formidable as the mountains and jungles of Jamaica and South America. The lack of successful maroon sites in North America (and their contrasting success in South America and the Caribbean) was primarily due to climate and geography, not degree of initiative.¹¹ Maroons employed any and all means to ensure their survival, enlisting knowledge gleaned from Native American, African as well as plantation cultures (Katz 1986).

¹⁰(Aptheker 1979). Dismal Swamp, the most notorious maroon community in the US was located between Virginia and North Carolina. The population there approximated 2,000 and trade was conducted with Whites on the of the swamp.

¹¹The greatest maroon community, that lasted for almost 100 years (1600 - 1694), was the Republic of Palmares in northeastern Brazil, ruled by King Ganga-Zumba whose name combines the Angolan word for 'great' and the Tupi Indian word for 'ruler' (Katz 1986: 46-47).

In the United States, Spanish Florida represented the best of maroon communities; its terrain, as well as amicable Indians and Spanish officials, proved most conducive to long term refuge for enslaved Africans. The principal goal of the Americans' plot to annex Florida was to eliminate the significant threat to slavery posed by Spanish controlled Florida.

The Seminole Wars

Ultimately, Europeans' fears of alliances between Native Americans and Africans materialized when the Seminoles and Africans joined forces in what was called the Patriots War of 1812 (Katz 1986). The Seminoles initially planned to remain neutral in this 'fight between white men,' but in response to Seminole Chief King Payne's request,¹² and Spanish Governor Kindelan's persuasion, the Seminoles and Africans united to repel Americans whose intentions were to capture, re-enslave or kill Africans, and to take over Seminole land. Brevet Major General Thomas S. Jesup referred to these wars the "Negro and Seminole Wars."

Negro Fort

Located on the Apalachicola River in Florida, Negro Fort, as it became known, was built by the British during their occupation of Florida.¹³ After the

¹²King Payne was the son of Cowkeeper, leader of the Alachua band of Seminoles. He took over leadership after Cowkeeper's death in the 1790s (Herron 1994: 36). King Payne was killed in 1813.

¹³The British Period lasted only twenty years, from 1763-1783. Spain then regained control until 1819.

British relinquished control of Florida to the Spanish in 1783, the fort's command was assumed by Black Seminole officers and others including 300 Seminole and Black Seminole men, women and children (Katz 1986: 54). Negro Fort was a haven for runaway Africans, who eventually settled inside of or adjacent to the protective fort, establishing farms for 50 miles along the Apalachicola River. European Americans were outraged by free Africans living so near their borders, and in July 1816 they attacked Negro Fort. The fort was destroyed by one cannonball that fortuitously struck the gunpowder magazine. Most of the estimated 50 survivors were returned to enslavement in Georgia. Others died from their injuries, but a few escaped to join Chief Billy Bowlegs' villages along the Suwanee River (Porter 1996: 16).

The First Seminole War: 1817-1818

Andrew Jackson's troops, together with allied Creeks, marched on Florida, destroying Mikasuki and Suwanee River settlements, home to both Seminoles and Black Seminoles. The invasion was motivated by the desire to acquire land and, more importantly, to eliminate the safe haven that Florida afforded runaway Africans from Georgia and South Carolina. Their buffer zone destroyed and severely outnumbered, the Spanish conceded the Florida territory to the United States in 1819.¹⁴ The Spanish departed for Cuba, taking along with them 145 free Africans (Landers 1996). The \$5 million paid to the Spanish for the Florida territory created the illusion of a real estate purchase, when actually

¹⁴The annexation was officially ratified in 1821.

Jackson's incursion was nothing more than a blatant usurpation of Spanish territory.

After the retrocession of Florida, the United States government drafted treaties that ceded land to free Africans who remained in Florida. Consistent with virtually all treaties that the United States government ever signed with Native Americans, agreements with the free Africans were not honored. European Americans who migrated to Florida found the prospect of coexisting with free property-owning Africans intolerable and forced them to sell their lands. Some of the displaced decided to join the Spaniards' exodus to Cuba (Landers 1996: 96-97).

The Treaty of Moultrie Creek: 1823

The Moultrie Creek agreement negotiated a cession of lands occupied by Seminoles and Black Seminoles in northern Florida in exchange for a southern tract. It also required the Seminoles to be "active and vigilant in preventing the retreating to, or passing through, of the district assigned to them, of any absconding slaves, or fugitives from justice and to deliver all such people to the agent and be compensated for their expenses" (Klos 1989: 57).

The Second Seminole War: 1835-1842

The Indian Removal Act, signed by President Jackson on May 28, 1830, forced the Seminoles and most other Native American nations in the southeastern United States (including the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw,

Creek) to relocate to Indian Territory, an area west of the Mississippi River in present day Oklahoma and Kansas. The Removal was an attempt to resolve the "Indian problem" for Europeans who wanted to settle on Native Americans' lands, but in Florida, it was just as much an attempt to finally solve the "Negro Problem" (Littlefield 1977: 12; see also Porter 1996). Some Seminoles resisted relocation to Indian Territory, notably Osceola. He was adamantly opposed to reunification with the Creeks who had become the Seminoles' sworn enemies.

Designed to favorably persuade recalcitrant Seminoles, the Treaty of Payne's Landing (1832) provided for a delegation of seven Seminole chiefs (selected by the Americans) to inspect Creek lands west of the Mississippi. If they found the land favorable, and the Creeks willing to reunite with them as one tribe, an agreement to remove within three years would be binding.

On March 28, 1833 at Fort Gibson in Indian Territory, the Seminole delegation signed a second treaty on behalf of all Seminoles, although they had no authority to do so, declaring that they were satisfied and ready to remove. A stumbling block in the negotiations was the disposition of the Black Seminoles. Seminoles feared that if they did take their Black Seminole allies (and some were possibly family members) along to the West, Creeks loyal to the Americans would try to seize and re-enslave them. Creeks, like Cherokees, practiced a harsher system of slavery than the Seminoles. Black Seminoles attempted to use

their considerable influence to persuade the Seminoles not to leave Florida.¹⁵

Some European Americans also attempted to persuade the Seminoles not to leave, plotting to seize the Black Seminoles among them legally, as soon as the laws of the United States were extended to Florida.

The bloody and protracted Second Seminole War commenced on December 28, 1835. Several key incidents sparked it: the capture and imprisonment of Osceola in an attempt to force him to agree to the Treaty of Payne's Landing,¹⁶ singling out Black Seminole leaders as targets for assassination in order to eliminate their influence over the Seminoles; and plantation raids by King Phillip's Seminole and Black Seminole forces. Attacks by Osceola's warriors and those of Micanopy, Alligator and Jumper, that included Black Seminoles, resulted in the deaths of Indian Agent Thompson at Ft. King and troops commanded by Major Francis L. Dade (Littlefield 1977: 11).

General Jesup, in command at the time of Removal, recognized that the "defeat of the Seminoles depended on the defeat or surrender of the blacks, who represented some of their fiercest and most intelligent warriors and leaders"

¹⁵The Black Seminoles' worst fears were realized when they eventually removed to Indian Territory. After the Seminoles signed a treaty with the Creeks, ending their hostilities in January 1845, Seminole-Black Seminole relations rapidly deteriorated. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 permitted Whites to enter Indian Territory to recover lost "property" or persons who still owed them services. Lacking their previously good relations with the Seminoles, Black Seminoles again found themselves vulnerable. The Black Seminoles' quest for freedom in the West "proved bitter, disastrous and futile until it was ended by the Civil War" (Littlefield 1977: 13).

¹⁶Osceola died in captivity.

(Littlefield 1977: 15). Beginning around 1836, General Jesup separated the majority of Black Seminoles from the Seminole Indians who surrendered to the Americans; some Black Seminoles were imprisoned, others were returned to their "owners" who swarmed into Florida to claim their property before Removal. Still others (approximately 240) migrated to Indian Territory with the Seminole Indians; they left in several groups, over a period of about one year, from Tampa Bay (Littlefield 1977). Some escaped, withdrew further into the swamps, and lived to fight yet another war with the Americans.

The Third Seminole War: 1855

A Congressional Act precipitated this final Seminole War that finally banned all Native Americans from Florida. Definitive victory for the United States in this war was elusive; approximately 200 Seminoles and Black Seminoles escaped into the Big Cypress and Everglades swamps, impenetrable by the United States troops. The Americans decided not to pursue. Some of these surviving maroons may have eventually migrated to The Bahamas. Others remained in Florida, rebuilding their population. Following is a newspaper story about one Seminole whose family remained in Florida. I quote it in its entirety because it illustrates so well history and heartbreak of those who remained. Jimmie Osceola committed suicide:

"Jimmie Osceola, 95, Dies In Big Cypress; Fought US In Seminoles' Last Stand"

Sept. 9, 1946 Miami Daily News (author unknown)

Jimmie Osceola, who fought under Billy Bowlegs when the Seminoles made their last stand 70 years ago against US troops in what is now Collier County, died yesterday in the Big Cypress. He was 95 and, according to Indian Agent Kenneth Marmon, probably

the oldest living Seminole. In the veins of Jimmie Osceola ran the blood of his ancestor, the great Chief Osceola. . . . Proud and taciturn to the last, he lived in one of the last wilderness areas of the nation, the Big Cypress. It was into this stronghold that the Seminoles were forced by the steady encroachments of the whites during the last century. Here Billy Bowlegs, for whom Billy's creek in Fort Myers was named, rallied the remaining young men of the bands, carefully hid the women and children in the swamps, and made his last effort to turn back the white man. The bloody campaign that followed found federal troops based at the military post known as Ft. Myers. After months of guerrilla warfare, Billy Bowlegs agreed to an armistice and many of the half-starved Seminoles came into the fort for removal to Oklahoma. Jimmie Osceola refused to surrender to the whites and, although he put down his arms, there was evidence that he never forgave the invader for broken treaties and treachery. . . . Billy Bowlegs was the last chief of the Seminoles. Jimmie Osceola might well have succeeded to that position, but in the bitterness of defeat, the Seminoles, who respected as many treaties as the whites broke, agreed to a condition that the "dangerous" office be kept vacant. . . . Little is known of the Seminole side of the three wars in which they defied the white man's aggression. Jimmie Osceola, perhaps the last living link with that era, carried his secrets with him.

Today, approximately 2,000 Seminoles reside on the Florida reservations of Hollywood, Big Cypress, Brighton, Immokalee, and Tampa. Others or live in adjacent cities and often commute to and from the reservations. The majority of them are organized as the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc. They proudly claim the distinction of being the only "unconquered" nation of Native Americans.

CHAPTER 6

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE BLACK SEMINOLE PRESENCE IN THE BAHAMAS

In ones and twos, in their dugout canoes, the Negro Seminoles crossed the Gulf Stream and landed along the western shore of Andros from the Joulter Cays south over a twenty year period They congregated at Red Bays. (Rev. B.A. Newton 1968:1)

Following the United States' annexation of the Florida territory in 1819, the number of European Americans migrating there dramatically increased. Their encroachment upon former Native American lands forced the Seminole Indians and Black Seminoles living there to retreat into maronnage, taking refuge in the swamps and hammocks of southern Florida. They were being "driven from their homes and hunted as wild deer" (Bahamas Royal Gazette 1819b). The greatest fear for Indian Seminoles was removal to Indian Territory in the West, but for the Black Seminoles it was recapture and return to slavery (Porter 1945). Africans and their Seminole allies fought courageously against the Americans, but with the exception of approximately 200 maroons who successfully escaped, they were effectively defeated and banished from Florida after the Third Seminole War. Seeking a remedy to their predicament around the time of the First Seminole War, an assembly of Seminole tribal leaders in Florida reached a consensus that Chief Kenadgie, a tribal elder, should travel "to New Providence [Bahamas] or Jamaica for the purpose of stating their

grievances and soliciting assistance" from the British.¹ Chief Kenadgie arrived on New Providence Island on September 29, 1819 accompanied by several others including an interpreter described as "an Indian of mixed blood" (Munnings 1819). The interpreter may have been Abraham, a Black Seminole who often negotiated on behalf of the Seminoles with the Americans and was Micanopy's personal interpreter. They complained to the British that about two thousand of their people in Florida were being persistently tormented, and that "their greatest enemies [were] the Cowetas . . . who having made terms with the Americans [were] set on them to harass and annihilate their tribe" (Bahamas Royal Gazette 1819b).

The British had promised support to the Seminoles in return for their loyalty during the siege of New Orleans. These promises were betrayed, however, when Chief Kenadgie attempted to enlist their assistance in the Seminoles' cause against the Americans. British officials in Nassau, New Providence advised them that, because of the recent peace treaty signed with United States of America, the British nation was not inclined to interfere in the Seminoles' current dispute (Munnings 1819). Kenadgie and his fellow travelers were provided with food and shelter on New Providence for one week, then

¹(Munnings 1819). This may have been an alternative spelling for Chief King Heijah (also known as Koe Hadjo, also known as Coa Hadjo, and also known as Alligator) who was listed as a resident of Negro Town in Florida that was occupied primarily by runaway Africans (Swanton, 1953; Mykel 1962).

summarily returned to Florida via the British schooner 'Primose' with their canoe² in tow.

Another party of Seminole Indians arrived on New Providence two years later. This time, however, the Seminoles expressed no explicit motive for their visit (Grant 1821). Ten of them had arrived destitute and in need of food and clothing. In a futile gesture of loyalty, one member of their party proudly displayed his Certificate of Gallantry and Good Conduct, awarded for service with the British troops in Florida during the War of 1812 (Grant 1821). Once again, the British leaders offered only provisions to the Seminoles, then sent them back to Florida.

The Seminoles must have perceived the Bahamas as "a natural refuge for Seminole Negroes" (Porter 1945: 58) and themselves because of alliances forged with the British in Florida and long-standing trade relations established with them in The Bahamas. The cordiality of Native American-Bahamian relations was demonstrated in the March 1st, 1817 issue of the Bahamas Royal Gazette that announced that "Hee leisaja a chief of the Creek Nation of Indians and his son sailed on the BLUCHER for London."

Several months after the second group of Seminoles returned to Florida in 1821, a third party sailed to The Bahamas. This group was much larger and probably included a majority of Black Seminoles (Goggin 1946). After years of

²(Royal Gazette 1819). According to Neill (1952: 65-66), "at that time, the Seminoles knew how to build large ocean-going dug-outs, equipped with mast and sail, capable of carrying 20 or 30 people."

struggle to survive the increasingly hostile situation in Florida, they decided to flee to the Bahamas where they hoped to live as free men and women. They congregated at Cape Florida and embarked in canoes and wreckers.³ An estimated 150 to 200 persons made the journey over a twenty year period (Newton 1968; Goggin 1946). The Seminoles' previous trips to the Bahamas had clearly demonstrated the futility of any efforts to secure sanctuary from the British on New Providence, so they altered their strategy. On this occasion, they landed on the northwestern shore of Andros Island, a large Out Island of the Bahamas due west of New Providence.⁴

Already present on Andros Island at the time of the Black Seminoles' arrival were British Loyalists who, along with enslaved Africans, migrated there in 1783 seeking asylum after the American Revolutionary War. They were refugees from New York, the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida (Bahamas Archives 1995: 11). At the same time, the 1783 Treaty of Versailles required British Loyalists to leave San Andreas, an island off the Mosquito Coast of Latin America. Most of the Loyalists migrated to Andros Island and Cat Island (Bahamas Archives 1989: 1-2). They were "a mixed stock of Scotch, Indian and Negro blood" (Parsons 1918: ix).

³Wrecking was a lucrative business along the Florida coast where ships, unguided by lighthouse beacons, would crash upon the reefs, spilling their cargoes. These cargoes would be salvaged and sold by privateers to Nassau customers.

⁴A few landed in the Biminis and on Joulter Cay. Many of them later joined the majority who settled at Red Bays.

The refugee contingent also included "freed Negroes." During the Revolutionary War, the British Military Commander had issued a proclamation promising freedom to all Africans who would join the British lines (Commonwealth 1984:11-12). Loyal Africans received British-issued certificates of freedom and many were subsequently permitted to live as free persons in The Bahamas. Others, however, were not as fortunate; they were sold by their Loyalist owners and re-enslaved in Santo Domingo.

Another group preceding the Black Seminoles' arrival on Andros Island was an undetermined number of "liberated Africans" who had been transported there after being rescued by the British Royal Navy from Spanish ships. These ships were intercepted en route to Cuba and other Spanish colonies where Africans were destined for enslavement. From 1811 to 1841 over 3,500 liberated Africans were landed on New Providence. Some were relocated to various Out Islands, including Andros, but the majority of them remained on New Providence in Nassau, the capital city. The majority of liberated Africans were likely from the Congo and Angola regions where the slave trade concentrated during this period. On Andros, they settled mainly in the northeastern side of the island. Goggin reports the following in a journal entry from Mastic Point, a northeastern Andros settlement :

Journal entry July 17 [1937]: "Red Bay 'Indian people' did not associate much with the other blacks--Congo people--on the east side for a long time."

The presence of "Congos" in this area of Andros was reported by a naturalist who interviewed a Mastic Point woman "whose mother and father were full-blooded Congos" (Northrop 1910: 14).

The presence of such a large number of Africans--free Africans who had never been enslaved--provoked hostility among white residents of Nassau. Sir J. Carmichael Smyth, Bahamian Governor and staunch abolitionist, attempted to assuage the brewing crisis by establishing several separate communities for the liberated Africans on the island of New Providence--the "African Villages" of Adelaide, Carmichael and Gambier--situated far outside the city of Nassau (Williams 1979). Black Bahamian descendants of these liberated Africans claim a legacy almost 200 years of freedom (Collinwood 1989a: 11).

Long before any of the above groups arrived, however, Andros was reputed as a bastion of piracy. The island served as a strategic location from which pirates ambushed Spanish ships en route to Cuba (Manwaring 1928; Commonwealth 1985). In fact, the bay at the northernmost tip on Andros is named Morgan's Bluff, in honor of the infamous pirate Captain Henry Morgan. Piracy in the Bahamas was substantially thwarted, if not totally eliminated, after the arrival of Woodes Rogers, appointed as the first Governor of the Colony in 1718 (Commonwealth 1985:8). His administration adopted the national motto: "*Expulsis Piratis Restituta Commercium*" [Expel the pirates, Restore Commerce] (Commonwealth 1985: 8). Andros Island's reputation as a haven for illegal activities persists even today.

By choosing the remote, northwestern coast of Andros Island--an area covered with thick coppitts⁵ and bordered by ship-detering shallow waters--the Black Seminoles finally achieved the sanctuary and freedom they had so long sought. All of them, however, did not remain in this area that they christened Red Bays.⁶ Some traveled southeastwardly along the shoreline, scattering throughout Andros Island. They joined established settlements or founded new ones at several places including Nicholls Town,⁷ Lowe Sound, Conch Bay, Mastic Point, Staniard Creek, Calabash Bay, Fresh Creek, and Mangrove Cay. Ironically, however, many members of these original settler families were eventually reunited in Red Bays over succeeding generations. Intermarriages frequently occurred between Red Bays' women and the men who traveled from other communities to North Andros for work, harvesting the fertile sponge beds of 'The Mud,' an area adjacent to Red Bays.⁸

⁵"Coppitt" is the Bahamian vernacular for the word "coppice," and refers to a densely wooded area.

⁶I was given two theories about the etymology of "Red Bays." Some say it is so named because of the reddish color of the sand on that coast; others say that the "Red" refers to the Seminole Indian, i.e., Red man.

⁷This settlement was most probably named in honor of Col. Nichols, a British officer with whom some of the them had served in the War of 1812 and who established Negro Fort.

⁸After the sponge beds died in the 1930s, the Red Bays settlement became much more endogamous. The community experienced an additional influx of new members during the height of the drug trafficking in the 1980s. Today, the few new members are added only through marriage and childbirth.

The Black Seminoles of Red Bays remained free and unmolested until June 1828 when a Port of Nassau customs officer seized and delivered to New Providence "thirty-two persons being black and persons of color, alleging them to be slaves brought from Florida and illegally imported into Andros Island, one of the Bahama Islands" (Grant 1828). Two months later, the Searcher of Customs issued a report with the names of "ninety-seven foreign Negro slaves" from Andros Island (Bethel 1828). Several names on this report correlate directly with the oral histories provided by my consultants on Andros Island who report that their foreparents were among the original settlers who escaped from Florida.⁹

The "discovery" of the Black Seminoles on Andros Island was likely precipitated by the Slave Registration Act passed by the Bahamas Legislature in 1821.¹⁰ In an effort to prevent the indiscriminate transshipment of enslaved persons from island to island, this Act required a triennial registration by "owners or persons licensed to export slaves from the . . . islands" (Commonwealth 1974: 20). These "Slave Returns" exposed the fact that the Black Seminoles—whose presence was most likely well-known to other

⁹See Appendix A.

¹⁰A triennial system for slave registration was instituted that required slaveowners to submit a list of their slaves, indicating name, age, sex, complexion ("Black" or "little yellow tinge" were common descriptions), place of employment and birthplace ("African" or "Creole," i.e., born in the West Indies). The Slave Registers date from 1821 to 1834 (Archives, Microfilm, "Slave Registers 1821-1834").

Androsians because of trade and sponging activities--were conspicuously absent from these Returns.

Both of the 1828 Customs reports indicated that the persons seized had been living on Andros Island since 1821, "peacefully and quietly, and have supported themselves upon fish, conchs and crabs which are to be met in abundance and upon Indian corn, plantains, yams, potatoes and peas which they have raised" (Grant 1828). Although it was initially suspected that they had been temporarily deposited on Andros Island by the Spanish for eventual shipment to Cuba, further investigation revealed that this was not the case; they produced documents attesting to their support of the British in the War of 1812. After reviewing the case, Bahamian Governor Smyth remarked that,

... the question of these people being considered as slaves illegally imported was not noted until they had already been settled here seven years and that during these seven years, there did not occur a single instance of any one of these Negroes being carried away to Cuba. I see therefore no grounds to suspect any improper motives on the part of the owners of the vessels who brought them from Florida; or to doubt the truth of the story told by the poor people themselves more particularly as many of them still have their discharges from His Majesty's service. (Smyth 1831)

Subsequently, the Black Seminoles returned to their homes in Red Bays where they were allowed to live in freedom (Bethel 1831). Their service in the British cause during the War of 1812, and provision of a line of defense against the Americans during the British occupation of Florida from 1763-1783,¹¹ were not the only reasons for this unprecedented latitude toward Africans in a colony

¹¹Porter 1945; Goggin 1946; Wright 1976; Kersey 1981.

where slavery remained an active policy. There were other equally important ones. First, this action would have been contrary to the Abolition Acts¹² that held that "persons arriving in any of His Majesty's colonies, from any foreign island or State where they were lawfully held in slavery cannot be sent back thither, or dealt with as slaves" (Barthurst 1826). Second, slaveowners in the United States were considered to have been compensated for their loss of "property" by the British Treaty agreed to upon the conclusion of the War of 1812. The Americans were paid "at the rate of £70 per head" (Smyth 1831). Therefore, the people discovered at Red Bays were neither returned to Florida, nor re-enslaved in the Bahamas. All of these events marked the beginning of the history of the Black Seminoles of Andros Island, Bahamas.

'The People Dem': Black Seminoles in the "Land Behind God's Back"

Red Bays remained an isolated community--accessible only by boat or footpath through dense coppitts--until 1968 when a logging company cut a road through the bush in order to facilitate the removal of cut trees.¹³ Red Bays was then, and yet remains, the only settlement on the western coast of Andros Island. The shoreline surrounding Red Bays has no sandy beach area, only mud.

¹²The Abolition Acts of 1834 abolished the institution of slavery in all British colonies, but due to the compulsory "apprenticeship period of four to six years, most Africans did not experience freedom until 1838 with the passage of the Emancipation Act.

¹³This road led to the main highway that runs the length of the island, north to south. The 15 mile road from Red Bays was not "black topped" until the late 1980s.

Andros Island, measuring 2,300 square miles, ranks as the largest island in the Bahamian archipelago and is alternately referred to as "The Big Yard" or "The Sleeping Giant." Comprising almost half of the longitudinal acreage of the island is a swampy, shallow area referred to as "The Mud." The Mud is the site of sponge beds that for many years were the foundation of the Bahamian economy and attracted Bahamians from many other islands seeking employment in the lucrative trade.¹⁴ The surnames of Andros residents reveal their island of origin.¹⁵ Migration numbers were especially great after Emancipation. In 1938, however, a mysterious bacteria attacked and destroyed the sponge beds, essentially wiping out the entire industry and decimating the Bahamian economy. Sponging eventually resumed but has never regained its once vaunted position in the economy.

The original 1821 Red Bays settlement was located 3 miles north of contemporary Red Bays. A devastating hurricane in 1866 forced evacuation of the community to higher ground; the place many of them relocated to was then

¹⁴The fertile sponge beds proved lucrative mainly to Greeks and White Bahamians who implemented the "truck-and-credit" system to exploit Black Bahamian laborers. This system closely resembled the "company store" scheme employed by Southern plantation owners to exploit African American sharecroppers.

¹⁵See Appendix B. Andros has more of a mixture than most other islands because of the large influx of laborers to work on the sisal plantation and in the sponging industry.

known as Lewis Coppitt.¹⁶ Years later the name of Lewis Coppitt was changed and the settlement became known as Red Bays.¹⁷

Bahamians have long had a fascination with the legendary "wild Indians" of Andros island as affirmed in Mary Moseley's *Bahamas Handbook*:

It is to be hoped that the mystery of the interior of this island [Andros] will some day be unfathomed by means of aviation, when the allegations of explorers as to the existence of a tribe of people who hunt with bows and arrows can be investigated. (Moseley 1926: 66)

Twenty years after this publication, anthropologist John Goggin conducted an archaeological survey of Andros Island. While in Mastic Point, a small settlement on the island's northeastern coast, he met 76-year-old Felix MacNeil. MacNeil informed Goggin that he was the grandson of Scipio Bowlegs a Seminole Indian (bush medicine) "doctor" who was among the first settlers of Red Bays.

Goggin's Journal Entry: Tues., July 6 [1937] at Mastic Point, Andros Island:
"... Later went down to the water and sat under a big almond tree where a Negro named MacNeil was making a sculling oar. Spent the rest of the day there talking. MacNeil is from Red Bay and is part Indian."

¹⁶The Lewis family had purchased 60 acres of land and gave the area their family name.

¹⁷This name change, I was informed, was made within the past 20 years. Three different explanations for this change are that (1) it was done to preserve the history of the original settlers; (2) it was precipitated by the attention the community received after the 1968 opening of the road, reportedly attended by over 200 people, and (3) publication of Rev. B.A. Newton's manuscript entitled A History of Red Bays, Andros, Bahamas the same year.

Parsons noted that the name "'Billy Bowleg' was once the vernacular on Andros for the Seminole Indian immigrant" (Parsons 1918: xv). MacNeil's family moved to Mastick Point after the 1866 hurricane devastated their home in the original Red Bays settlement. Goggin's encounters with MacNeil and others led him to conclude that he had "positively identified the legendary Indians of Andros Island as Seminole Negroes." (Goggin 1946: 201).

Functionalism and Oral Tradition

Felix MacNeil's personal narrative recorded by Goggin (1937) correlates with the oral tradition of Andros residents whom I interviewed. Oral traditions are "messages transmitted beyond the generation that gave rise to them" (Vansina 1985: 13), and like personal narratives, they can function as a means to validate one's life by "making sense of various experiences lived through and, in a sense, created through the narrative" (Vansina 1985: 13). More than mere testimonies to the past, oral traditions are "of interest as structured aesthetic and personal creations in the present" (Finnegan 1992: 48). As most if not all of the Black Seminole immigrants were illiterate, the only means of recording their family histories was oral. The oral tradition of the Black Seminoles in the Bahamas—as expressed by Red Bays residents, Felix MacNeil, and as finally rendered to print by Rev. B.A. Newton's *A History of Red Bays, Andros, Bahamas (History)*—broadly conforms to an "account," something that Vansina defines as "[a story] fused out of several accounts [that] has acquired a stabilized form" (Vansina 1985: 17), and whose content has a specific, yet unobservable, function

in society (Vansina 1985: 100). These functions become clear when a causal relationship can be demonstrated, i.e. when it can be demonstrated to have benefit to party X or party Y (Vansina 1985). The detection of the relationship, then, allows us to uncover its purpose. An accurate perspective of the purpose or function that a particular oral tradition performs in a society requires socio-historical knowledge of a community, a context within which to make an interpretation. As such, a diachronic analysis of the oral tradition of Red Bays reveals the critical timing of the publication of Rev. Newton's *History*. It is not only the content of the *History* that is critical to consider, but the context in which it was first published. Its 1968 publication coincided with a time of great sociopolitical change in Red Bays and The Bahamas in general.

Context: Red Bays

Red Bays is often maligned by other Bahamians who generally refer to its residents as poor and "backwards" people. Occasionally, Red Bays is referred to as "The Land Behind God's Back."¹⁸ The publication of *History* promoted a new identity for Red Bayans as descendants of a courageous group of people who sailed across the Gulf Stream to escape enslavement in the United States, who had always lived as free men and women in the Bahamas, who created a self-sufficient livelihood, and who had survived against tremendous odds.

¹⁸This is a quotation from a Nassau resident who was well acquainted with Red Bays. Many people I encountered throughout the Bahamas had a rather negative perception of Red Bays.

The fourth generation of Red Bayans was now poised on the brink of unprecedented opportunities, thanks in large measure to the opening of a new road built by the Owens-Illinois Company for their logging operation in Andros.¹⁹ Not only did the road provide access for removing cut timber, it also provided an easier means for outsiders to enter the settlement. This drew new customers who came to purchase mangoes and citrus fruits, others to participate in bonefishing, a challenging "sport" for fishing enthusiasts for which Red Bays' men have a reputation of expertise. Still others came to purchase the unique baskets crafted by many Red Bays women, and a few of the men (Newton 1968: 4). Rev. Newton obviously recognized that Red Bays was in store for monumental changes, closing his *History* with these comments:

I believe that this is an appropriate spot to finish my short history, as the opening of our road brings the first chapters to a close, and will be opening up a whole new story. (Newton 1968: 4)

Context: The Bahamas

Powerful waves from the vortex of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in the United States impacted many West Indian countries, including The Bahamas. The Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), representing the Black Bahamian majority, gained control of the government in 1967. The PLP's policy theme was "Bahamianisation"; the policy's explicit political goal was to give Black Bahamians preferential access to long-denied employment and ownership

¹⁹This project was accomplished in conjunction with the Bahamas Industrial Corporation.

opportunities in business and industry (Collinwood 1989b). Its sociocultural goal was to elevate Black Bahamians' self-image, to excavate their pride that had been buried under centuries of colonization and enslavement. Rev. Newton saw this particular time as an unusual opportunity for members of the Red Bays community to gain cultural capital in the contemporary sociopolitical and sociocultural milieu. Publication of *History* was the means of educating the world outside of their still rather isolated community about the unique quality of their ancestry.

The Oral Tradition of Black Seminole Descendants on Andros Island, Bahamas

Following are excerpts from interviews that I recorded with Andros Island consultants who traced their Seminole Indian heritage (see Appendix D). The majority of the narratives included here are from residents of the settlement of Red Bays, Andros Island.

Rev. Bertram A. Newton--Red Bays Settlement

Rev. Newton served as my host and primary consultant in Red Bays. He credits Pastor Joseph Lewis, whose grandfather Sammy Lewis (named on the 1828 Customs roster "Sam Louis") was an original Red Bays settler, as the source of most of the information contained in the *History*. Rev. Newton is a community leader, former teacher and principal of the Red Bays All-Age (later named 'Primary') school, and Pastor of the settlement's only church--New Salem Baptist. Rev. Newton views recording the oral tradition of Red Bays as an imperative for posterity. As he says,

... [it] is going to be very, very important for the oncoming generation, say, like my grandchildren and like the great grand that will come after (Newton 1996).

Rev. Newton traces matrilineal and patrilineal descendency from the original settlers. His great grandfather, Moses Newton, was also named on the 1828 Customs roster. As Rev. B.A. Newton tell the story,

I am the son of Rev. Eldrack Eneas Newton and Adranna Newton Dean. Adranna was born at Red Bays Andros to Ellen Dean Pinder and ... Eldrack Newton was born in Staniard Creek Andros, that's Central Andros. He was the son of Arthur Newton, [who was] the son of Moses Newton, one of the Seminole Indians who came from Florida about 1845.

Eldrack Newton went to the [World] War, my father, that is, about 1914. He was born in 1900 and went to the War in 1914. ... After he came from the War, he had had nothing to do. He came down sponging at Red Bays, saw Adranna, marry her, settle here. ... Adranna was the granddaughter of Mary Lewis, also a Seminole Indian that came from Florida with her brothers and those, and Watkin Lewis, and her father Sammy Lewis. ... They have had together, well my mother told me 18 children ... and I was about the second. But only nine were known to live.

[RH: Can you tell me whether they [the original settlers] were full-blood Indian or were they mixed Indian and African?]

Mixed, Yes mixed. But, Moses Newton and Sammy Lewis they had full resemblance of Indians and I have not gotten the history whether they were full-blooded or not. .. But it is my opinion that they were because of the description of their faces.

And so, Eldrack Newton came here sponging on the boat because in those days, sponge was the main industry here in the Bahamas. And there, as many as 100 and ... 38 or something like that, boats would come out here from all throughout the Bahamas and come down to Red Bays sponging which they call mud sponging ... because the sponge was gotten on The Mud ... they would rest on corals and then you find them in the mud holes. They would surge themselves until they get in holes ... even now today people go out here and sponge.

... There was a settlement of those persons who never stopped at Red Bays or congregated at Red Bays, Nicholls Town, Lowe Sound and the

Joulter Cays. They went right straight on up the shore and they . . . stopped in Staniard Creek. . . . There may not be any now alive, but I sure that there are descendants like the Bowlegs, Russells, the MacNeils and . . . the Demerittes.

There was a medicine doctor came along with them. He was good on bush medicine. Once someone in the group get sick, he would go in the bush and find the medicine. He was called Scipio Demeritte.

[RH: Did he pass his trade along to his family members?]

Well I believe so because my mother-in-law, Omelia Marshall is now known to be called the bush doctor here in Red Bays . . . when people got sick, she would go in the bush and can recommend different medicine to people. She is the granddaughter [of Scipio Demeritte] . . .

Rev. Benjamin Lewis--Red Bays Settlement

Rev. Lewis is a 69-year-old retired seaman and construction worker who now serves as the Associate Pastor of Red Bays' New Salem Baptist Church. He was off island, working in Nassau when his father, Joseph Lewis, related the history of Red Bays to Rev. Newton. He returned home after his father got sick and he remained in Red Bays after his father's death. Rev. Lewis remembered that

He [his father] let me know that I'm a part of the Seminole Indians. My great grandfather was Sammy Lewis which was his grandfather. He came from Florida in a canoe and the first place they rested was at Cedar Coppitt. Later on down, they move from Cedar Coppitt and they went up into a lake and they came into a little island and he were fall in love with the little island, and he give it name Sammy Lewis after him.

He stood there for while, and after, he thought it is fit that he travel some place else. He start traveling down north 'til he reach a place down here which he call Red Bay. And he was there until an hurricane came, and this hurricane overflow the place. And they leave from there and they came up here to the place call Lewis Coppitt. This place was a huge coppitt and one day my grandfather, Watkin Lewis, this was Sammy Lewis son, he went through this coppitt and he began to search through it

and went to come back out, he got lost and been in there almost a whole day. They used to call it "Lost Man Coppitt." After which he purchased 61 and 3 quarter acre ground and give it name Lewis Coppitt. And the Lewises were the first to settle here in this little part of Andros which is the last tip of North Andros call Red Bay.

But this place is formerly known as Lewis Coppitt. And he preside here and he raise up his sons and daughters and after departure of the old man Sammy Lewis, then Watkin Lewis and his children stood here. And later on there are some others come in and join with them and make this to become a settlement. The majority of the people living here are mostly branch off from the Seminole descendant. Because he had daughters and sons and they marry, and they children grew and the others come in and marry to they children, and they grandchildren. And therefore, this settlement become an outstanding settlement as it is today. We the people of Red Bay we give God the glory for the old patriarch Sammy Lewis who had made preparation for this coming generation. And that is why we, the Lewises people, is call the Seminole descent. There were the MacNeils and the Bowlegs what join along with those people.

Today we have lots of different descendants. We have the Russells, we have the Colebrookes, we have the Marshalls, we have the Newtons, we have the Barrs, we have the Taylors we have the Knowles, we have the Motts, and many others who came in and made this little township a success.

William "Scrap Iron" or "Old Iron" Colebrooke--Red Bays, Settlement

"Old Iron," as he is known to most local people, tells me that he is 61 years of age. He earned his livelihood on the sea until he lost the use of his boat. He still occasionally goes out too sea with other men from the settlement--fishing or crabbing--but as a rule he is a solitary character. Old Iron now makes his living sewing²⁰ baskets. He is noted for sewing some of the largest baskets ever crafted in Red Bays, including the one he made for me that measures 34" in

²⁰"Sewing" is the term Red Bayans use when describing how they weave baskets.

height and 160" in circumference. He often served as my "guide"; we biked three miles through the bush, mostly along an old logging road, to the site of the original Red Bays settlement. Old Iron related to me that

In the years past, when the war was on, the people, the Seminolians from Florida, travel by canoes from Florida and the first place they end up was Big Cross Cay, then come into Red Bay. And from Red Bay they settle there for a while. Some of them stop at Red Bay and some of them travel on from Cedar Coppitt to go down the shore as far as come round up to Driggs Hill, Behring Point, come round Mangrove Cay, Long Bay Cay, and all of them, and come straight up round there to on the east side of Andros. Maybe some may gone into Nassau, I don't know.

[RH: Were your great grandparents some of the original settlers?]

Um hum, such as Mary Russell, Pa Watkin and amongst them. And John Lewis, Shaddy Lewis and so on. When a hurricane come down the place flood and they move from there [original Red Bays site] and come up to Red Bay. . . this place now. At first they call it Lewis Coppitt because one set of the Lewis was here first, and the other set was down to Red Bay. Then the main boss who was over all of them come up here, then all decide to live at Lewis Coppitt. Then after all the old folks dead out, then [Rev.] B.A. Newton say we'll change the name from Lewis Coppitt to Red Bay. That's how this place get to call Red Bay. This place is not Red Bay. This happen in the early part. What time I can't remember. My great grandma, Ma Mary, all of them come from Florida. . . ."

Rev. Frederick Russell--Red Bays Settlement

Rev. Russell, 68 years old, was born and raised in Red Bays. For many years he served as a deacon in Red Bays' New Salem Baptist Church, and is now the Pastor of Mizpah Baptist Church in Nicholls Town. Rev. Russell is one of only few older generation Red Bays' residents who received any formal education beyond Primary school. He told me that he may not know the history as well as Rev. Newton,

Because I spend a majority of my life off from here . . . in Nassau. I was a train nurse at the Princess Margaret Hospital. I grew up here, I had my education here in the All-Age School, called E.E. Newton All-Age School. The highest grade was then grade 4 and I went through grade 4. After I left school I went to Nassau. I was then 19 years old. . . . My father name was Joshua Shadrack Russell and my mother name was Leanora Russell . . . and they both are dead now. They were very poor people. They was a part of the Seminole Indians descendant. My father, his mother was a sister of the Lewis, Sam Lewis who was an Indian. He came here from Florida I heard, and my daddy was one of her sons . . . He got married to my mother Lenora Newton from Staniard Creek.

My father[’s] mother was Celeste Russell . . . I can’t remember her, when she died I was very small then. . . . Her father was Watkin Lewis and it was couple a those brothers . . . it was Sam those men, I heard, came from there (Florida) in a boat, in a canoe. My mother[’s] father or my grandfather was also an Indian [Moses Newton]. Now all of those men did not stay in one community. They separated. My mother[’s] father went into Staniard Creek, that’s in Central Andros. That’s where my mother was born. And Watkin Lewis, he stop here. They travel from . . . Cedar Coppitt area, that’s about 10 miles, or maybe more, from here where we are. And they travel along the shore until they get here . . . I heard that one of those Indians went into Conch Sound.

They [Lewises] had Indian blood . . . and one stop into Mastic Point I think, and so on, but they separate themselves from each others, and then they married . . . they get children . . . and all of they children become their generation, and so we call the whole body of Indians, the Seminole Indians, a generation.

Mrs. Alma (Prudence) Miller--Lowe Sound Settlement

Mrs. Miller, 69 years young, was tending her garden when I approached her house. Skillfully wielding a cutlass,²¹ she chopped the weeds away from her small crop of cassava, eddy,²² and corn in the yard next to her house. She welcomed me into her home, happy to share with me what she remembers about

²¹“Cutlass” is the term Bahamians use for a machete.

²²Eddy is a tuber, similar to a white potato, but it has a sweeter taste.

her Indian heritage. She is a tall, "bright," striking woman; it is easy to understand why, in younger years, she bore the nickname "Andros Glamour." She quickly loosed her bound-up, straight black hair that flowed past her shoulders. She was anxious to display her "Indian hair," as she called it, as a sign of credibility. In her words,

My family told me that in the slavery times, my foreparents were run away on a raft from Florida. And they come into Bahamas. . . . They was my foreparents, great grands . . . Alice and Isaac Miller. But they first stop then was in Eleuthera. And one set had a family that stop by Cedar Coppitt [Andros], and therefore they make a home from there come through with the people and them Indian and whatever. And granddaddy went up in Eleuthera . . . and they buy a lot a land up in there. And they come here [to Andros] and they buy a lot a land down here [In Lowe Sound] . . . and about in the swashes. [In] Eleuthera they open up a pineapple farm, and they had a sheep farm, and they had a beef farm up in Eleuthera. So the family scatter from Eleuthera and Andros and on South Andros. That's a wide wass of family of people. Some of the Millers still is in the States, you know. You come cross one or two of the family [there] . . .

. . . My mommy told me that daddy [Edward Miller] use to tell them, say that when they goes to work in slavery time, they have a white boss, like the master. . . . So they would go out and they work and they do all they master's work and sometime they be beaten. Then when they master beat them, they used to lay down. On they belly, face down the master used to beat them. Beat them good. They used to work for the masters. Mostly, say the old people tell when slavery began abolishing, then they begin running away on the raft to come to the Bahamas.

Now them set what come over, I can't tell whether they been African or they's a pure blood of Indian. I know they was a Indian family, they was Indian blood. But just know when I be young and be traveling [in Florida] and the Indian they begin owning me, as a part of them. Sometime I see them right here in Nassau. They come over on trips and I go in the States the same thing. I go New York, the same thing, no different. Just when I buck one of them, they own me, they hold me up.

Charles Bowleg--Nicholls Town Settlement

Charles, a man in his mid to late forties, lives in Nicholls Town and is readily identified by Bahamians as "Indian" because he is "bright" and has high cheekbones. He is a member of the Bowleg family that has long-established roots in Nicholls Town. Charles told me that he learned the story from his grand aunt, Blossom Bowleg:

... She was Blossom Bowleg until she got married to Evans. Her parents came from the west coast of Andros. Her grandparents came from Florida and they landed on the west coast at a place call Cedar Coppitt. And after a period of time, they was on the west coast, on the back side of Andros. It is very low so a hurricane came through, a very serious hurricane, and it wash out a lot of the land, and they were seeking for higher ground. So several of the younger ones, they get in these small boats, a canoe what they come over in, and they find a narrow passage which they call Bowleg Lake. The mouth of it enter in on the northeast side at Stafford Creek, and it goes in right straight through to the western part of the island. Big boats only can go half way down through there because of the area, some areas is so narrow and the water is so shallow and you go in about probably 5 miles and then the water's fresh. And the fresh water and the salt water at times pushes each other back an forth. So they use that as a channel to come through on the north side. Her grandparents told her that after they come over, they find on the north side was a much better place, higher ground. Then they went back and get the family, and come on the north side.

... After they came on the north side, they never went back. Blossom, Felix [are] brothers and sisters. ... Their father was one of the original people who came over. It was Simon and another one name Scipio, two brothers, Bowleg and they the ones what come from the west. And then they migrate from there. They was mostly fishermen and farmers, and they sail all through the Bahamas and they left one or two here and there. So the family scatter out all through the Bahamas, but originally Bowlegs all from Nicholls Town. We have some in western Grand Bahama, and we have some in Eleuthera, but not a big amount. The big amount is in between Nassau and Freeport, west end.

I never knew my great grandmother, I never recognize her name, but I heard she was mixed with Indian blood, light-skinned. Some [Bowlegs]

were bright and some black. One of the sisters were medium brown, one of the sisters were bright. She was so bright they used to call her "Gold."

I used to go to Florida a lot when I was much younger and I run into several people who told me that they bears the same title [Bowleg], even white ones. I run into a custom officer an he told me "You's a Bowleg?" I said, "Yeah." This other gentleman, his title was Bowleg. So he look at me, he say, "Oh, we got black ones too!" So he say, "and I see you from Andros." Say, "You know we are family?" So I say, "No, I don't know that." He said that most of his parents were Indians and they married white women, and that's how come he was white. But we have real bright girls and boys in our family, and some of them is real black. My mother was very bright and my daddy was light brown. But one thing is that they [Indians] never like boss man too much. The majority of them work for themself . . . very short-temper. They rather fight one time and get it all over with. As far as the Indians is concern, they pretty peaceable until you get them out. Then they don't care about life anymore. That's the way it is.

Tellis Smith--Mastic Point Settlement

Tellis, in his forties, is the great grandson of Felix MacNeil, the man Goggin met at Mastic Point in 1937. Tellis lives in Nassau but visits "down home" as frequently as possible where he maintains the family house. Tellis learned the following from his grandmother:

Well, my [maternal] grandmother was Marion Pickstock, and she told me about the Indian story and it goes like this: I understand they [the Seminoles] landed in Red Bay. Now the year I don't know. And they was the original Bowleg family. She was a MacNeil, marry into Pickstock. [Felix MacNeil], that was Mama's grandfather. They came over in a canoe and landed in Red Bay.

They migrated from Red Bay into Mastic Point. My mother was Aslea Pickstock and she marry into Smith. Pickstock was actually from England, migrated to British Honduras, from British Honduras into Mastic Point. They came over on a boat called the Potomac. The Potomac got shipwrecked on Nassau bar. My granddaddy [who was a free man when he came from British Honduras] marry into Pickstock from the shipwreck and they stayed here until his death.

Mrs. Omelia Marshall--Red Bays Settlement

At 80 years of age, Mrs. Marshall, affectionately known as "Mama" or "Meena," is considered the matriarch of Red Bays. She is both revered and feared; rumors abound that she is an Obeah woman. Obeah is a system of beliefs in African cultural tradition that involves the use of rituals, magic and charms. She still practices bush medicine (taught to her by her father), but had to give up her practice of midwifery due to threats from the PLP government that ordered her to stop delivering babies or go to jail. She blames this problem with the PLP administration on the fact that she has always been a member of the FNM (which was the opposition party for 25 years in The Bahamas).

We met on many occasions in what she calls "Marshall Town," a compound-like setting with several small houses and shacks set roughly in a circle--including a "Tatch Camp" (chickee-like) structure--where she lives among three generations of family. The women of Marshall Town can be seen daily sewing baskets in the yard. Even a few of the small children sew too, proudly showing off their attempts at basketry. Mrs. Marshall's father, she says, was the first to start the basket sewing tradition of Red Bays; he used sea grass and formed them in one style--the fanner. She, learned the craft from him, but improvised the style and materials.

Marshall Town is the main stop on tours of Red Bays, conducted mainly by students from Forfar Field Station²³ who come for 'lectures' about Red Bays' history and culture from Mrs. Marshall. In fact, she received a plaque commemorating her outstanding 'hospitality' from the Bahamas Tourism Board. She is very proud of this plaque and is quick to send one of the children to the house to retrieve it for viewing by visitors. She remembers that

My great granddaddy was Scipio Bowleg, and his son is Scipio Bowleg, and my daddy is Scipio Demeritte. My mother is Marion Demeritte. She formerly from Red Bay, but my daddy from Lowe Sound. . . . I come from Lowe Sound when I was 9 years old, bathing in the seas naked . . . 9 years old. My grandmother name Marta Celeste Russell.

My great grandfather they say he leave from America Land where the Seminoles come from. Then when he come from there, he stop to Josie Cay [Joulter Cay]. From Josie Cay he leave from there and he go down to Cedar Coppitt and build he house. He kitchen and he house foundation still there.

These oral traditions have been passed down through the older generations, but unfortunately, are rarely repeated to the children of contemporary Andros Island. The times when stories were told around a fire would fill the emptiness of dark nights are gone; television and street lights have replaced them. The following chapter will explore these and other cultural adaptations, retentions and innovations among these descendants of the Black Seminoles.

²³Forfar Field Station is a marine biology field school for US high school students and teachers., located in Blanket Sound, Central Andros.

CHAPTER 7

A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE ON THE BLACK SEMINOLE PRESENCE IN THE BAHAMAS

The contemporary community of Red Bays reveals incredibly diverse and often contradictory elements. Just twenty years ago, most of its residents lived in houses with thatched roofs, cooked outdoors on open fires or in separate structures built for use as kitchens, had no telephone service, no indoor plumbing, and few cars. The settlement experienced an economic boom during the 1970s and 1980s, attributed both to the construction of a twenty mile stretch of road that finally made the community accessible by vehicle rather than solely by footpath or boat, and to the lucrative drug trade that was rampant in the Bahamas at that time. These events dramatically transformed lifestyles in the settlement for most residents. Large cement-block or frame houses with ceramic tile floors and satellite dishes in the yards have replaced the majority of austere structures. There are some Red Bayans, however, who apparently chose not to participate in or were simply left out of the new-found bounty. Although there are no more thatched roof houses, there remain those with no indoor plumbing, kitchens, or electricity.

One notable group of residents is the extended family of widowed Mrs. Omelia Marshall, eighty-year-old matriarch of Red Bays. She boasts of being the originator of the unique basketry crafted in Red Bays. Taught by her father who

sewed baskets with sea grass, Mrs. Marshall introduced innovations in styles and materials; she uses various types of "top" from palm thatch plants in place of the original sea grass.

Journal Entry 2/18/97

Mrs. Marshall's father (Scipio Demeritte) used a needle he made from light wood to sew baskets. She now uses a metal needle, supplied by "the White people." Her father cut fanner grass (sea grass) on the edge of the sea and made baskets from this. He could only make the fanner, but she started making them with covers (lids). Then she and others started improvising more designs. She started in the 1980s making baskets with "top" instead of sea grass and sold the first one to a White man, "Mr. Steve", who was working on the road (The main road into Red Bays just got 'black-topped' or paved in the late 1980s). She tells me, "I didn't ask nothing! I gone!" (i.e. she didn't need anyone's permission to make this change, she just went ahead and did it!) She says that people in the settlement laughed at her, saying "What Momma think she doing? That boat will never float!" But when they saw her making lots of money from her new style baskets, they stopped laughing and started making these baskets too. She told them emphatically, "The boat floatin'!"

The residence pattern of Marshall Town, as she calls her compound, includes five varied size frame dwellings built in a circle, a Seminole-style chickee structure, a well, and no electricity. She and three generations--grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren (biological and adopted)--live amongst precarious rock outcroppings and dense vegetation that includes cassava, eddy (a potato-like tuber) and corn plants, as well as coconut, sapodilla, apple and pear trees. Her children, three daughters and two sons, also still live in Red Bays. In the early morning, or when "day clean," as she calls the dawn, she can be found cultivating her garden with cutlass in hand or, later, joining her family in sewing baskets throughout the day under a canopy of coconut palm and fruit trees. The residence pattern and activities of

Marshall Town are similar to those of their distant "relatives" from the Sea Islands of South Carolina, another place where Africans were isolated for a very long time. Twining and Baird found this residence pattern still in existence while researching Sea Island culture and state that:

Among traditional African Americans in South Carolina, there are domiciliary complexes or "compounds" consisting of several households assembled on the basis of kinship and economic constraints. Organized around the oldest progenitor couple, often around the senior surviving female progenitor--since women tend generally to outlive men--such a complex of households encompasses brothers and sisters and their families all living in houses close by. . . . This residence pattern closely approximates its African counterparts. . . . Members of the family sit in groups under the trees making baskets, joking, and generally enjoying one another's company. (Twining and Baird 1991: 4-5)

This residence pattern did not occur in any other settlement in Andros Island, nor any on other islands I visited (Cat Island, New Providence, Grand Bahama, San Salvador). Because my survey was severely limited, however, I cannot state categorically that the pattern does not exist elsewhere in The Bahamas.

Kinship, Social Structure and Household Composition

Definitions of household composition and family structure in the Caribbean vary significantly according to author and agenda, and have been the subject of much debate (see Frazier 1939; Smith 1988, 1982; Safa 1995; Herskovits 1941; Gonzalez 1984; Clarke 1957; Simey 1946; McKenzie 1993; Braithwaite 1983, etc). Eurocentric models of kinship often distort what consultants tell anthropologists about the nature of their household and social structure. Distortions occur because conceptualizations of kinship are not merely

functional, but contextual and, therefore, should not be translated into European familial terms. Since filiation is culturally defined, our concern must be with the system of concepts that reveal what their actions mean to the people themselves (Smith 1988; see also Leach 1961; Schneider 1984).

Viewing kinship as a dichotomy of consanguines (blood relatives) and affinals or (in-laws) consigns most of the Caribbean and many other world societies to the category of "bizarre, irrational, and difficult to appreciate" (Schusky 1983: 15). Kinship relations in the Caribbean are not necessarily defined by consanguineal ties; the kinship link is often culturally, rather than biologically, defined. From the earliest days of their arrival, Africans enslaved in the Americas

extended the bonds of kinship beyond the boundaries of individual households, uniting family members who were forced to live apart by the circumstances of their enslavement. The language of kinship expressed a broad range of mutual obligations. Slaves addressed each other as brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, conferring the status of kin on men and women who were unrelated by blood or marriage. (Berlin and Rowland 1997: 3).

The theoretical models of Smith (1982) and Gonzalez (1984) are particularly useful in the analysis of Red Bays' households and reflect the extended boundaries mentioned above. Smith characterizes the West Indian family as a "domestic system which does not confine relations within an easily defined or bounded household" (1982: 121). Gonzalez (1984: 7) defines Garifuna households as "ephemeral transitory agglomerations of kin who cluster together when their personal needs compel them to seek succor and subsistence,

or when they can be drawn in (even coerced) to help support others." Both of these models are useful because the composition of Red Bays' households sometimes changes weekly as "relatives" decide to stay in Red Bays for brief or extended periods of time. In Red Bays "relative" includes consanguineal, affinal and fictive kin; residence is a more critical factor than consanguineal ties in defining kinship.

Their definition of "relative" includes "adopted" family members. These are not legal adoptions in most cases, but nonetheless are considered binding commitments. "Relatives" can also include sisters and brothers who are "outside" children. These "outside" children fathered by a man with women other than his legal wife, a common practice, are most often considered full siblings by the children of the legal union. For example, the woman in whose home I resided for most of my tenure in Red Bays told me that her father claimed a total of 38 children with five women including her mother, his only legal wife. The result is that she has many siblings at or near her same age. She (and her mother) always knew about her father's outside liaisons. She regards most of these other women warmly, some as "play" or surrogate mothers, and their children as brothers and sisters (making no Western-style distinctions of "half- or step-"). Because of the tendency of men to father children with multiple women, "consanguineal relatives through the father appear more numerous than those through the mother" (Smith 1988: 56).

Demographics and Household Composition in Red Bays

There are forty-four households and a population of 283 in Red Bays.

Women and children comprise eighty-one percent (81%) of the population (See Table 1). Most households in Red Bays consist of three or four generations, inclusive of adult siblings and their children, grandparents, nephews and nieces, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren (See Appendix C). The emphasis is on the mother-child bond, not the conjugal unit.¹ This type of family structure permits "instability in conjugal ties, while maintaining great stability in both the family and kinship systems" (Smith 1988: 345; see also Safa 1986: 5).

Table 1: Population of Red Bays, Andros Island

Women	Men	Children (under 18 years of age)	N=
64	55	164	283

Figures as of August 1998

One taxonomy commonly used by Caribbeanists to define household composition and structure is legal marriage; common law (conjugal or residential) unions; and visiting (extra-residential) unions. Employing these categories, the data from the British Caribbean reveal that 48 percent (48%) of all

¹ The following quotation from Bascom (1941:48) illuminates a similarly taut mother-child bond amongst Gullah families in the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia: "In the structure of the Gullah family there seems to be a certain matrilineal emphasis for which there are counterparts in Africa. For example, there is the feeling that an individual is somehow more closely related to his mother than to his father. There are several rationalizations for this, but one is the same as that offered in Africa, namely that a person is fed on his mother's milk."

households consist of legally married unions and about 20 percent (20%) are of the conjugal/residential type (McKenzie 1993: 76). The trend varies regionally, depending upon ethnic and class factors. Red Bays diverges significantly from the legally married statistics. Fifty percent (50%) of Red Bays' 44 households are couple-headed. In 77 percent of these, the man and woman have been legally married. Thirty percent of Red Bays' households are single occupant households, all of which are composed of men who split their residency between Red Bays and Nassau or other Family Islands.² Twenty percent are single female-headed households. The majority of men currently have or have in the past had extra-residential unions with sweethearts³ "down de road" (in Red Bays) or "up de shore" (in other communities of Andros) from which liaisons "outside" children were born.

Polygynous relationships--common in Red Bays and in The Bahamas in general--were a features of both African and Native American cultural traditions. These multi-partner relationships were also "actively promoted by the European slave-owners who encouraged, even compelled, the breeding of many children to increase the labor force" (Twining and Baird 1991: 5). Therefore, the origin of this tradition can be variously attributed.

²Men leave seeking employment opportunities that are unavailable on Andros Island.

³"Sweetheart" is the term used for an extra-marital partner.

The majority of Red Bays' women have borne children from multiple unions--most have had at least one child before legally marrying--yet no distinctions are made among the children within the household, e.g., half- or step-sister or brother. This pattern of relationships between biologically and non-biologically related household members was confirmed in the research conducted by Otterbein in a South Andros community where he determined that "membership in a corporate group rather than consanguineal bonds creates relationships" (Otterbein 1963: 176).

Appendix D reveals the close familial ties of many Red Bayans. In several instances, first cousins can also be considered brothers and sisters, based upon Eurocentric filial definitions. These distinctions are not made (or at least not voiced) in Red Bays.

Often women will attest to male headship of their households even though they themselves may play a stronger role in the actual household decision-making and income-producing activities. These claims may result from what Safa terms the "ideological norm of male dominance" (Safa 1986: 10).

Massiah (1986:103) concurs stating that

identifying the head of a household is always problematic, since it involves both an objective and a subjective element. Usually men as 'breadwinners' are assumed to be heads of households. This is not always the case. However, culture and patriarchy have so institutionalized male headship that quite often reported proportions may be over-rated.

In a study of household structure in a community in South Andros Otterbein reports that even in situations where the woman is the property

owner, "the man is director of the household" (Otterbein 1963: 131), and therefore, it is classified as male-headed. This scenario is common in Red Bays where only one male performs wage labor outside the settlement. All of the others engage in fishing, sponging and wood carving (or some other form of "informal" economic activity) when the weather permits. The money he gets from these activities is often used, Potlatch-style, to buy drinks all around, all night long (often before his mate or children have received any of the money) until the funds are depleted. Most women grumble but don't confront the men. "No diffren, Mon. He still de boss." A male's hegemony can be contested, however, most often by withholding sexual relations.

The power relationships that existed in colonial times and persist today have critical implications for the formation of kinship alliances in the Caribbean. Taxonomies of household structure and kinship in the Caribbean measured against a dominant Western model of the nuclear family upholds power, and "power maintains the order of the world" (Pocock 1971). By employing these categories that correspond to a specific conceptual order of reality, other aspects of reality are suppressed or deprecated, and, thereby, negated. Rival theoretical stances are assaulted by the power structure; "power is thus never external to signification--it inhabits meaning and is its champion in stabilization and defense" (Wolf 1990: 8). Challenges to status quo analyses of Caribbean culture have been denigrated or, worse yet, ignored. Today, anthropologists should confront the powers that have for so long perpetuated and universally defined

"normal" social organization, by creating new paradigms to deconstruct ideologies that serve to sustain the relations of domination (Page 1993: 80).

The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean and Red Bays

Gender is a dynamic and dialectical cultural system that "interacts with and affects social structures and culture and is also affected by the same" (McClaurin 1996: 21). Red Bays reflects Bahamian society in general in its patriarchal organization, predicated upon male dominance over the activities--productive and reproductive--of females.

In The Bahamas, as in as other parts of the British Caribbean region, women have always worked outside the home in large numbers and, as a result, the sharp private/public or *casa/calle* dichotomy found in the Spanish Caribbean and Latin America is not extant. Yet, like the women of those cultures, Bahamian women historically have wielded little influence in the public sphere. Gender asymmetry is reinforced by an androcentric political system; women did not win suffrage in The Bahamas until 1962. Even after the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP)--formed in 1953 by the Black Bahamian majority--wrenched political control from the Bay Street Boys, the status of women in The Bahamas went largely unchanged. Throughout the twenty-five year reign of the PLP, no women ever occupied decision-making positions in their government. At a 1997 campaign rally in North Andros Island, Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham, the Free National Movement (FNM) incumbent and candidate for re-election, used this fact as a hammering point when he commented that

For twenty years in the Bahamas the PLP could not find a single person with a gown-tail who they felt was worthy to sit around the cabinet table of The Bahamas. For twenty years, no female could be a minister in their government. And today, they have 17 seats in the House [of Assembly]--it ain't for long--and not a single woman. And they ain't running a single woman for a single seat in this election. (Ingraham 1997)

PLP leaders perpetuated patterns of male hegemony that were learned as part of the legacy of capitalism and colonialism in The Bahamas. The more egalitarian male-female relations traditionally inherent among many African cultures were obscured as the PLP leaders sought to emulate the actions and attitudes of their former masters.⁴ Among the significant sociocultural changes effected by the FNM when they gained control in 1992 is the inclusion of women in high-level government positions. Currently, women serve as Ministers of Parliament, Senators, and head several Bahamian Government Ministries.

Smith's (1965) conception of the cultural construction of gender roles in the West Indies is consistent with the case of Red Bays. He states that masculinity is not defined in terms of a man's occupation nor whether he has a job at all. Instead, it is defined by his number of sexual conquests or by "having children all about" (Smith 1988: 147). A similar gender role construction may also apply to women. As Safa states, "adult status and feminine identity among Caribbean women are based on motherhood and not marriage, and most low-

⁴According to Safa, the relatively egalitarian traditional kinship relations found in colonial Latin American, African, and indigenous societies were eroded by "capitalist penetration and colonialism" (Safa 1995:38). These relations were, of course, further transformed through the colonial experiences of enslavement and political and cultural hegemony exercised by various European powers.

income women start to have children long before they marry, often in their teens" (Safa 1986:12).

This also applies to Red Bays, where most of the women there do not complete high school because they get pregnant at a young age, and the men display obvious pride in "having children all about"; what they consider the manifestation of their sexual prowess. When I asked Rev. Newton, my primary consultant, about how the community views pregnancy among unmarried women, and the phenomenon of "outside" children he replied:

... The church in our Baptist society, we do not scorn the person. Because consider yourself to be in the same predicament; that can happen to anyone. It's an uncertain thing that you can't control. You can control it in a sense ... but the person, if the child don't know how to control it. You may tell them but they will not heed what you say. And if they do not know and they get themselves into trouble you just can't throw them away! You gotta let them know that they are still loved, you know, and ask them not to make the same mistake. That's all you can do. But I would not just ... fuss them out, because I remember the story of those who drag a woman to Jesus and said Sir, "this woman was caught in adultery, at the very act, what you have to say about that?" Moses say, "take them and stone them." Jesus say, "You who don't have a sin cast the first stone on her."

Although the community technically does not approve of pregnancies to unwed mothers, the mother (unless very young) and her child are not ostracized.

MacCormack and Draper's research in Jamaica confirms that

... sexuality is usually conceptually linked with the desire to create children. For both men and women, perceptions of self-identity and social power are contingent upon the expression of sexual potency which is confirmed by the birth of children. (MacCormack and Draper 1987: 143)

Due to the lack of economic opportunities for men and women, procreation is seen as a means of gaining status (MacCormack and Draper 1987: 146-147). Ironically, however, there is still a double standard that recognizes the natural proclivity (even duty) of males to express their sexuality by their late teens, women are expected to retain their virginity until marriage (Otterbein 1963: 104).

Livelihood Strategies

Contemporary livelihood activities in Red Bays differ considerably from those of the original settlers who grew, caught, or raised everything they ate. Many harvested the rich sponge beds⁵ of The Mud, just off the shore of Red Bays and some worked the large Chamberlain sisal plantation.⁶ Today, there is no major farming activity; some people cultivate small subsistence gardens (using the cutlass their primary tool) and consume wild plants, e.g., eddy, but the majority are almost entirely reliant upon store-bought goods and the sea for their survival.

Today, the economy of Red Bays is predicated upon fishing, sponging and basketry, activities that are predominantly gender specific. There are three men who are woodcarvers. Sponging belongs solely to the masculine realm. Men also do the fishing; women infrequently accompany them, although they

⁵The fertile sponge beds proved lucrative, mainly to Greeks and White Bahamians who used the "truck-and-credit system to exploit Black Bahamian laborers. This system closely resembled the "company store" scheme employed by Southern plantation owners to take advantage of Black share-croppers.

⁶The sisal plant was located in Mastic Point and run by Neville Chamberlain.

never drive the boats. These activities, however, are seasonal and weather-dependent. Because they own only small 15 foot fishing boats that cannot withstand high seas, they are often prevented from going out. This also means that their families will not have much to eat.

The settlement's only "consistent" income is generated from the baskets woven primarily by women, although some of the most skilled at sewing baskets are men. The few men whom I observed sewing baskets are perceived by others in the settlement as either too weak to go out to sea, "anti-men,"⁷ or down on their luck with no access to a boat. The income from baskets is neither regular or dependable. Most people sew baskets with hopes of selling them to tourists who infrequently come into Red Bays. Some also consign their baskets to one woman who makes weekly trips out of the settlement to sell at the fishing and diving resorts in other parts of Andros Island. She also occasionally makes a shipment to Nassau, where the Red Bays' baskets bring a premium price in tourist shops (unfortunately, the mark-up is not passed along to the crafters). Red Bays' baskets have gained a reputation for excellent construction and uniquely attractive styles and can be singled out immediately because they look different from any others made in The Bahamas. Crabbing, another seasonally-lucrative livelihood strategy, is an activity in which men, women, and children participate.

The personal narratives of many adult residents whom I interviewed reveal quite a different scenario of life in Red Bays when they were children.

⁷A colloquialism used in many parts of the African Diaspora for gay men.

Most of the community--men women, and children--boarded a sailing ship every January for the trip to Billy Coppitt in Central Andros where they would spend six months farming. There was no strict division of labor; everyone farmed the fields. Omelia Marshall was in charge of both work and school lessons there. These lessons consisted of reading from the only book available--the Bible. This accounts for the fact that many adults in the settlement, who are otherwise semi-literate or illiterate, are adept at quoting Bible verses memorized over those years. The farming tradition is clearly among the least desirable livelihood strategies for the younger generations of Red Bayans,⁸ despite the fact that Andros Island, containing the largest tract of arable land in The Bahamas, presents a vast potential for successful farming. Unfortunately, this negative attitude about farming is one shared with other Bahamians as illustrated in these comments: "I'll do farmin' and fishin' . . . but not on such a scale as to really make money because [I] proud and farmin' is for Haitians" (Collinwood 1989b: 12).

Status in Red Bays is based upon consumerism; he or she who has the most money, the better house or better "trans,"⁹ also has the most clout and/or respect. There is a curious mixture of stages of capitalism in Red Bays. It can be characterized as early industrial (see Safa 1995: 39) because of their isolation and the lack of wage labor opportunities for Red Bayans. Some people migrate,

⁸The "false economy" created by extensive drug trafficking led to an inverse ratio of work to profit that now discourages harder work for smaller returns, such as those gained from farming.

⁹"Trans" is Bahamian slang for a car or other vehicle, i.e., transportation.

seeking employment in Nassau or on other Family Islands, though not as frequently as other Bahamians. Remittances and child support payments are not much of a factor in Red Bays, but income from these sources and government welfare subsidies do play a role in the local economy.

CHAPTER 8 CULTURAL IDENTITY

An Overview

Cultural identity is a result of socialization, much as religion, sexism, and racism (cf Geertz 1963). Always 'in process', the construction of cultural identity is dynamic and contingent upon the variables of situation, individual interpretation, and power. These variables in turn are modified by socioeconomic forces, political forces, new experiences, and life cycle changes (Sithole 1986; Paranjpe 1986). Any interpretation of cultural identity, therefore, must of necessity be multiply defined. Accordingly, cultural identity among the Black Seminoles and the Seminole Indians evolved from their unique historical processes and situational forces and varied over the course of time. From their ethnogenesis¹ these unique New World ethnic groups--both conglomerates of many nations and ethnicities--were constantly in the process of identity formation and reformation.

¹I use the term ethnogenesis to illustrate that both of these groups were aggregations of many tribes and nations of peoples. For example, the Seminoles comprised various Indian tribes or nations, and the Africans who became the Black Seminoles comprised many different African nations. This differentiates their experience from the processes referred to as oreolization and transculturation that connote the synthesis of cultures to greater or lesser degrees between members of groups in contact. Ethnogenesis, instead, describes an internal group process where a new ethnic identity is created.

Seminole Indians

Seminole culture is derived from an amalgamation of linguistically and culturally diverse Native American nations. The Creek Confederacy, from which the Seminoles emerged, already comprised many different towns and ethnicities in the territories now known as Georgia and Alabama. As the Seminoles moved into the Florida territory, beginning early in the 18th century, this mixture was further diversified by various indigenous nations encountered there.

The Creek nation, also known as Muscogeese, originally inhabited the territories later designated as Alabama and Georgia. The Muscogee were split into two groups located alongside two watersheds: the Upper Creeks along the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers in Alabama, and the Lower Creeks near the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers in Georgia. The Muscogee polity incorporated different ethnic groups: the Hitchiti-speaking groups, including the Apalachicolas, Chiahas, Hitchitis, Yamasees and others; the Alabamas (including the Alabamas, Koasatis, Tuskegees and others); and the Muscogeese (including the Kasihtas, Cowetas, Coosas, Abihkas, Hothliwahalis, Eufaulas, Hilibis, Wakokais, Tuckabahchees, Okchais and others) (Littlefield 1977). Moore (1996) notes that in addition to the above groups, the Yuchis (Eucheese), Shawnees, Natchez, Coushattas, Choctaws, Cherokees, and African American Freedmen have at various times been considered part of the Creek and Seminole Nations.

Notwithstanding their cultural and linguistic differences--for example, the Hitchiti language was mutually unintelligible with Muscogee--these nations

were conflated under the classification "Creek" by English traders.² Upon marriage to Seminole Indian women, Africans "became Indians or free citizens, [enjoying] equal privileges with them" (Bartram 1996 [1791]: 37-39).

Muscogee towns and chiefdoms were modified and realigned due both to the influence of European incursions into their territory and alliances formed with Europeans by various factions. The primary town in the Muscogee chiefdom was Coweta. The dominance of the Cowetas allowed them to incorporate other chiefdoms by persuasion or force, demanding conformity to the Coweta language and ceremonial practices. Malcontents, mainly from the incorporated ethnic groups who disagreed with Creek alliances with the Europeans, seceded from the Muscogees and were important factors in the ethnogenesis of the Seminole nation in Florida (Miller 1997: 15).

One of the primary dissidents was Seacoffee (Seepeycoffee), son of the micco³ of Coweta. Seacoffee led a migration from British controlled Georgia and Alabama to Spanish controlled Florida in the 1720s and 1730s. They established the beginnings of the Seminole chiefdom in the region of present day Tallahassee (Miller 1997: 15). Beginning ten years later, the Oconee, another ethnic group associated with the Muscogees, led by Wakapuchasee (Cowkeeper), moved into

²English traders originated the term Creek. Its etymology has been variously rumored to have been due to the proximity of these Native Americans to numerous rivers and streams, and alternately, because the Muskogees (called Ochesee by the Hitchiti after they invaded and settled on Hitchiti land) who resided along the Ochesee Creek.

³"Micco" means king.

the Alachua Prairie, the area now known as Gainesville where they became the first group to be labeled "Seminoles." The Oconee conquered various groups during their expansion southward, including the Yamassee (Miller 1997: 16). The Oconee became dominant in the Seminole nation, retaining power through matrilineal succession until the late 19th century (Miller 1997:16).

It is clear from the above evidence that the Seminoles, then, were a nation composed of linguistically and culturally diverse groups. Attributing specific traits of "Seminole culture," therefore, is a dubious undertaking. In Florida, a mosaic of Native American culture was juxtaposed to a mosaic of African cultures.

Black Seminoles

Like the Seminoles, the African peoples who were forcibly removed from their homelands were not homogeneous. They were taken from geographically widespread areas of West and Central Africa. Even those who originated from the same geographic area did not necessarily share cultural identities. These individuals did not originate from 'bounded' groups in Africa as Ranger comments:

Almost all recent studies of nineteenth-century pre-colonial Africa have emphasized that far from there being a single "tribal" identity, most Africans moved in and out of multiple identities, defining themselves at one moment as subject to this chief, at another moment as a member of that cult, at another moment part of this clan, and at yet another moment as an initiate in that professional guild (Ranger 1988: 248).

Yai concurs with this, asserting that

One important religious feature or practice which has not received the critical attention it deserves, and which is relevant to the apprehension of the concept of nation . . . and to an understanding of its instantiations in the New World diaspora is the existence, permanence and indeed the cultivation of the phenomenon of *double or multiple religious and cultural loyalty--across geopolitical entities* (Yai 1996: 6, original emphases)

The illusion of 'bounded groups' was actually created by Europeans in an effort to more effectively control Africans and served to artificially codify fluid identities into bounded tribal systems (Shaw 1995: 6).

As a social construction, the ethnic group's establishment and maintenance are based upon group-defined political and economic goals that set them apart or form boundaries between themselves and others in the same socioeconomic system (Glick 1985: 151). At times these boundaries are breached as diverse groups become united against a common foe or are in pursuit of a common goal. However, in the case of Africans who were victims of the slave trade, ethnic group boundaries were externally imposed.

The African peoples who came to the New World were confronted with the necessity of reconstructing identities upon arrival; their common denominator was their subjective position of 'slave,' a position that was defined in the discourse of European hegemony. The identities that Africans constructed were centered not only in 'roots', but in 'routes;' their cultural memories were interpolated with the varied oppressive social forces to which they were subjected. A "temporary attachment" was formed, thereby creating new identities (Hall 1996).

Africans who settled among and developed alliances with the Seminoles became, in many ways, "an integral part of the Seminole people" (Wright 1981:277). Enslaved Africans who fled into Florida and subsequently became known as Black Seminoles, did not, however, automatically become "culturally Indian," but formed societies that were distinct blendings of African American and Native American cultural practices. There was no cultural dominance by either group, a situation that Herskovits describes as transculturation.

Herskovits (1964: 173) suggested that the term transculturation is more useful and less evaluative than the term acculturation for expressing the process of the mutual exchange of culture in situations of contact. I concur, and choose to employ the term transculturation rather than acculturation because it more concisely defines the nature of cultural contact between the Seminole Indians and Africans.

Their common experience at the hands of Europeans--kidnapping, displacement, enslavement, and genocide--served to create a lasting bond between Seminole Indians and Africans. Perhaps their strongest bond was a common enemy, Europeans, who sought to strip the Seminoles of their lands and to return the Black Seminoles to enslavement. Another bond, I suggest, was spiritual. Despite their inter- and intra-group cultural diversity, African and Native American peoples share an underlying epistemology or world view. Epistemologies are rarely explicitly stated, yet strongly influence behavior, much

"the (same) way in which language is used without conscious reference to its grammar" (Weisman 1989: 150).

These shared components include beliefs in a Supreme Creator who is unknowable and sacred, contact with whom requires the intercession of lesser beings, e.g., "spirit helpers" (Native American) and '*orisas*' (African); the spirit world that exists side by side with, and intermingles with, the physical world; the interrelatedness and dynamic interdependence of all life forms; the harmony ethos; wellness as harmony in spirit, mind and body, generated from within not from externally; circularity--immortality and existence are circular rather than linear; art and religion are integral parts of everyday life, not objectified; an oral tradition, and; the mystical power of women. The strength and depth of the bond formed through shared epistemologies has extensive ramifications, but did not in the case of Seminoles and Black Seminoles lead to a situation of cultural dominance by either group.

Instances of conflict or disharmony between Native Americans and Africans have often been externally influenced. Africans received the cruelest treatment at the hands of the Cherokees, a nation whose members were the most acculturated of all North American nations, intermarrying and socializing extensively with European Americans.

Intermarriages between Seminoles and Black Seminoles occurred, though not extensively, and Black Seminoles adopted the Seminole style of dress and mode of house construction. Seminoles learned rice cultivation and other

agricultural techniques from the Africans (Littlefield 1977). However, archaeological excavations confirm that Black Seminoles most often lived in separate communities, usually located nearby their Seminole 'masters' (Herron 1994). Confirmation of this is also provided in the account of an American doctor, William Haynes Simmons:

The Negroes dwell in towns apart from the Indians, and are the finest looking people I have ever seen. They dress and live pretty much like the Indians, each having a gun, and hunting a portion of his time. Like the Indians, they plant in common, and form an *Indian field apart*, which they attend together. (1973 [1822]: 76, my emphasis).

The "Indian field apart" is an area of cultivated land "whose produce was consigned to the Seminole micco who ruled the town" (Miller 1997: 65). This physical separation may reveal a conscious desire on the part of both groups to essentially maintain the integrity of their own cultural systems (Mulroy 1993). Africans maintained the tradition of patrilineal descent (as differentiated from Seminole matrilineal descent), as well as African naming traditions that conferred upon a newborn the name for that day of the week or month of the year. In fact, two men named July and August were community leaders and valued interpreters who negotiated on behalf of the Seminoles with Europeans.

The Black Seminoles spoke an "Afro-Seminole" creole that combines West African grammar with English lexicon and resembles the Gullah language of the Sea Islanders (Miller 1997: 65-66). Concurring with this point, Bateman asserts that

the blacks who became associated with the Seminole in Florida most likely . . . spoke an English-based creole language. We know that this last point is plausible because linguist Ian Hancock (1975, 1977, 1980) discovered that older Seminoles of Brackettville Texas, had retained knowledge of an English-based creole, which Hancock termed "Afro-Seminole Creole" that was very similar to Gullah. The evidence indicates that this creole was also spoken in the Oklahoma and Mexico communities [where Black Seminoles migrated], and probably the Andros Black Seminole settlement as well. The blacks spoke Creek/Seminole with the Indians, but probably the creole within their own communities. Thus, the Black Seminole, while they did adopt some Seminole cultural practices, retained a significant degree of cultural, linguistic, and political autonomy throughout their history. (Bateman 1998: 208)

The "Black Towns" that were associated with the Seminole towns in Florida can be understood both as maroon communities--whose members were constantly prepared for guerrilla warfare (Mulroy 1993; Price 1979;)--and as "structural components" of the Seminole towns (Riordan 1996: 64). As a matter of survival, maroons were multilingual, a skill that facilitated their interaction with Europeans, often on behalf of the Seminoles in treaty negotiations.

African Identity

The proclivity to identify with African heritage has undergone a continual evolution in the African diaspora, waxing and waning according to situational--economic, political, and social--forces. Because of the preponderance of erroneous claims, promoted especially in the 1940s, about the inferiority of Africans and their culture (much of it gathered without the benefit of any physical presence in Africa or any empirical investigation), many African Americans were ashamed of Africa--the dark continent--and wanted to distance themselves from any association with an African heritage. According to

Herskovits, no group in the United States has "been more completely convinced of the inferior nature of the African background than have the Negroes"

(Herskovits 1931: 31)). This same phenomenon occurred in the Caribbean.

Ethnic identity in the Caribbean is heavily shaped by the African experience.

Yet, Nettleford recognizes that

a major part of the region's cultural difficulties is the persistent denial among many Caribbean people themselves that the African Presence is central to the ethos of the region. Much of what is now 'Caribbean' has indeed been forged in the crucible of the African experience in its myriad encounters with all others for over four centuries. (1993: xiii)

The Black Seminoles, once relocated in The Bahamas, had, once again, to renegotiate their identity. Initially isolated from Bahamian society by their location on the remote and inaccessible northwestern tip of Andros Island, they adapted to their new environment and I surmise that their concerns would have been primarily subsistence-related. Although the institution of slavery was yet viable in The Bahamas at the time of their 1821 arrival there, the Black Seminoles were not subjected to it by the British when discovered in Red Bays in 1828. Although they remained relatively isolated for over one century--contact with the outside world occurred mainly as a result of the sponging activity on The Mud--their exposure to and integration into Bahamian culture gradually increased. Despite their lack of enslavement in The Bahamas, descendants of the Black Seminoles were victimized by the same hegemonic colonial political, economic and social policies as other Black Bahamians. So regardless of any possible desire on their part to stand apart from other African-descended

peoples in the Bahamas and the circum Caribbean region, the process of creolization applies to them as well.

Creolization

In *The Birth of African-American Culture*, Mintz and Price describe the process of creolization among Afro-Caribbean peoples as

one of rapid and sustained adaptation to the colonial power structure, to a new economic regime, to an alien language and to a multitude of social conventions dictated very largely by the dominant European elite. The pace at which this adaptation occurred depended in some degree upon the African composition of existing slave population and the density and character of the local European population. This varied widely in the British colonies.

Nettleford defines creolization as "the agonising process of renewal and growth that marks the new order of men and women who came originally from different Old World cultures (whether European, African, Levantine, or Oriental) and met in conflict or otherwise on foreign soil" (1978: 2). Further, he states that the phenomena of "decolonization (of self and society) and creolization (or indigenization) represent that awesome process actualised in simultaneous acts of negating and affirming, demolishing and constructing, rejecting and reshaping" (Nettleford 1978: 181).

The shape of Caribbean identities has been severely modified since the 1960s. According to Karl John (1974), the external forces of modernization, media and tourism and the internal dynamics created by independence gained in the 1960s and 1970s, radically altered societies in the Caribbean.

Cultural Identity in the Bahamas

Historically, Bahamians did not wish to be identified as West Indian let alone *African*. Interestingly, the peoples of other Caribbean nations did not consider Bahamians to be West Indians either. The mere fact of Bahamian geographical juxtaposition to Caribbean countries did not make them West Indians, just as their close ties with the United States did not transform Bahamians into North Americans (Collinwood 1989b). In this sense, The Bahamas is a "world between worlds" because it does not fit into any neatly proscribed category "that social scientists invent to define the world" (Collinwood 1989a: 2). This state of "in-betweenity" (Best 1996) causes much consternation among Bahamians who are often accused of having no culture at all.

Generally, West Indians were (and often still are) pejoratively characterized by the Bahamian term "Grabalicious"⁴ Because of these attitudes, and the association of Black assertiveness with the 'primitive' behavior of pre-colonial Africa (a characterization promoted by White Bahamians), "[i]t has been easier to affirm the Afro-Bahamian identity than to claim to share a common West Indianness . . ." (Hughes 1989:88). According to Hughes,

Bahamians shared to a considerable extent, though for different reasons, the white Bahamians' distrust of West Indians . . . [who] were generally perceived as snooty like the Barbadians, or

⁴(Wilson 1989: 87). The term 'grabalicious' connotes greedy and/or arrogant behavior.

quarrelsome like the Jamaicans, and invariably ready to undercut a Bahamian for a job. (1989:87)

Despite their dissonance about inclusion in the definition of West Indian the idea of West Indian identity has begun to be embraced by contemporary Bahamians as a result of consciousness raising about their common legacy of colonization as well as the forces of globalization. For example, Bahamians have become increasingly involved in Caribbean organizations, such as CARICOM,⁵ except in the area of shared currency (e.g., the Eastern Caribbean dollar or EC) because the Bahamian economy is in much better condition than most of the CARICOM countries, its dollar enjoying parity with that of the United States. Nettleford acknowledges the need for greater cooperation among Caribbean states, suggesting that

[d]espite the diversity of Caribbean life and the surface fragmentation evident in small sovereignties (all with standard bureaucratic rigidities), there are 'submarine' unities manifested in shared cultural identities and sense of community . . . on which functional economic cooperation can be built [e.g., CARICOM]. (Nettleford 1993: x)

Generally, the Black Seminole descendants on Andros Island, especially those in Red Bays, are seldom found engaged in the discourse of macroeconomics or shared Caribbean identity. Their fundamental concerns have an apparent focus on the microeconomic issues of daily survival.

Cultural Identity Among the Black Seminoles of Andros Island

I do not intend here to practice "redemptive ethnography . . . using the past to redeem the present for the future"(Shaw 1995: 13)--but instead to

⁵CARICOM is the acronym for the Caribbean Common Market.

interrogate whether these descendants are using this discursive practice as an opportunity to reinvent their identity, to carve for themselves a place in Bahamian history, thereby creating an oppositional image to the characteristic Bahamian ascription applied to them: backward, and uneducated "wild hogs."⁶

This can be related to the Foucault's notion of the correlative function of power and knowledge whereby people re-create themselves (Layder 1994). In the effort to transform their identities, ascribed by the power networks of Bahamian society, they redefine themselves at the micro level by scrutinizing the 'politics of everyday life' (Layder 1994). Through this process of self-definition--if this is indeed their objective--these Black Seminole descendants assert their power by creating a new position for themselves in Bahamian society through the construction of a knowledge base, or discourse, about their ancestry. This is a self-actualizing, emergent process. At a 1988 University of Florida conference, Aime Cesaire spoke about the propensity for self-definition among Afro-Caribbean peoples, stating that "Blacks must create a rehabilitation of our values by ourselves, the re-rooting of ourselves within a history, within a geography, within a culture" (Young 1995: 14). In *Becoming West Indian*, Young asserts that "[t]he value placed on culture, the need to protect it against intrusion from foreign media, the need to compensate for the alienation, the self-denial, imposed by their history indicate a new recognition of self-identity" (1995: 14).

⁶This pejorative reference is used by high school children to poke fun at the children from Red Bays (Deandra Barr 1996, personal communication).

These sentiments were apparent among many residents of Red Bays, predominantly among the community elders. The "intrusion from foreign media" (Young 1995)--especially television broadcasts from the United States beaming in through the satellite dishes fixed in the yards of many residents--and other effects of modernization have robbed the younger generations of the opportunities to "talk ol' storee,"⁷ the teaching vehicle that adults in Red Bays traditionally used to maintain their history and identity through parables and folklore passed down through many generations (Parsons 1918, see also Edwards 1889). The uniqueness of Androsian culture is demonstrated by Moseley who cites Andros Island as "the only island in the Bahamas that has a native folklore, the others having adopted the African, and quaint stories are told by old residents of the chickannies [chickcharnies] (fairies)" (Moseley 1926: 66).

During the course of the interviews I conducted, I queried my consultants about self-identification: whether they actively recognize their Black Seminole heritage by labeling themselves as Black Seminoles or Black Indians; whether they view themselves as "different" from other Bahamians and if so, does any special status attend to this "difference;" do other Bahamians recognize them as

⁷Parsons described the practice of 'ol storee' as follows: "You *talk* ol' storee . . . almost anywhere I could get a group of women and children around me eager to talk "ol' storee" for a penny or two. . . But the best way to hear the stories is in the evening, the time when they are wont to be told . . ." (1918: x).

"different"? The question of identity is centered not only in 'roots', but in 'routes.' As Hall notes:

Though they seem to invoke an origin in an historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. . . . Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity. . . . (Hall 1996:4)

Overall, my research findings revealed that the fact of Black Seminole heritage, is essentially a non-issue as far as their status in Bahamian society is concerned. I believe that perhaps they view the publication of their oral histories as a means of distinguishing or creating some niche for themselves, although they still wish to be considered 'Bahamian.' Almost any Bahamian to whom you mention the name "Black Seminoles" will be able to tell you that "those Indians" live on Andros. However, little more information will be forthcoming because that history is more innuendo than fact. The Black Seminoles of Andros Island were isolated for so long (although they did come into contact with others through of the sponging activity on The Mud) that they were a mystery to most Bahamians; stories about Red Bays' residents are mostly the stuff of legend and folklore.

During his archaeological research on Andros Island, Goggin was informed by his consultants that "Red Bay 'Indian people' did not associate much with the other blacks--Congo people--on the east side [of Andros Island]

for a long time" (Journal entry July 17, 1937). These 'Congo people' were actually liberated Africans who had been resettled on Andros, and other Out Islands, by Governor Smyth in the attempt to relieve that pressures mounting on New Providence Island as a result of the presence of large numbers of Africans 'fresh off the boat' (see Chapter 5).

Responses to the question of self-identification or cultural identity among my consultants were as follows:

Alma Miller: But when I went over there (Florida) . . . they had told me, say, "You a Indian." So I tell em "No, I not no Indian, I Bahamian." He say "Yes," he say " look at your bones." He say, "your eye bones is the Indian," . . . then, "look at your hands," say, they the Indian hands." So I tell him, I say, "my foreparents was come from here (Florida), but I a Bahamian." (Interview 1996)

Mrs. Miller is one of only three persons whom I interviewed who looks phenotypically Indian; one of the other two is her sister Mary Russell. While she readily admits her Seminole heritage, and proudly relates the story told to her by her mother, she emphatically identifies herself as a Bahamian.

Rev. Benjamin Lewis: Like the reaction of the Indian or so, we had no part of that because, my father was just . . . a Bahamian . . . he just tell us of what he know from his father. And it wasn't no difference from what you see is on today. (Interview 1996)

This account indicates that while the stories were passed down about their history and how they came to be in The Bahamas, they retained no allegiance to their previous lifestyle or identity.

Charles Bowleg: We really is Bahamian because any place you were born that's your home, not really Bahamian, Androsian. That's what I call myself because if it's anything, Andros owe me a living, no place else.

You can chase me from any place else in the world, but when I reach here, I ain't going no further. (Interview 1997)

Here Charles Bowleg makes clear the point that although his ancestors may have come from Florida, his identity and loyalty lies with the only place he has known as home, Andros Island, Bahamas. When asked whether he considers himself different because of his Seminole ancestry, Rev. Newton, my primary consultant, simply replied, "No, we are too much Bahamianize" (Interview 1996).

In some ways, the juxtaposition of many "identities" may be viewed in dialectical relationship; there is no elimination of one for another, merely a discourse that changes based upon the audience.

CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

Distorting racial history . . . injures dark children. They live with a muted heritage. Despite Black Indian contributions to this land, neither Black nor Indian children nor their parents have an awareness of this legacy. . . . Further, they divide people today who could benefit from unity. (Katz 1986: 17)

This ethnohistorical research study recounts the relationship between the Seminole Indians and the Africans with whom they shared a unique relationship for more than a century in Florida, the Black Seminoles. The topic of interrelationships of Native Americans and Africans, two groups of "other" peoples who were systematically subjected to physical and psychological subjugation and genocide by various factions of Europeans in their conquest of the New World, has been obscured in the conventional historical record. The description offered in this study demonstrates how these "others"--Seminoles and Black Seminoles--manipulated and negotiated ways to survive and transcend the devastating effects of European hegemony, and provides a fascinating and informative means of filling the historical void. This study uncovers some of this history and follows the trail to The Bahamas where a small number of Black Seminoles finally secured the freedom they sought and fought for, through various means of resistance, for over 100 years. It is my hope that

this study will provide new awareness and/or knowledge of New World history, awakening it from its long-suffering dis-ease of "structural amnesia."

To accomplish this aim, I culled archival documents and secondary sources on the slave trade, Native American and African cultures, and Florida and Bahamian history. In addition, a critical part of this puzzle was found in the oral histories that I recorded while living in The Bahamas with Black Seminole descendants, primarily in the settlement of Red Bays, for one year.

The Black Seminole descendants on Andros Island (and those who have moved elsewhere) enjoy an extraordinary and unique legacy, one that distinguishes them from other Bahamians. Their ancestors had a tradition of resistance and survival against the odds that in many ways remains evident in the contemporary community of Red Bays. They consciously chose or fortuitously embarked upon a different path than the majority of Black Seminoles in Florida, many of whom were forcibly removed to Indian Territory along with their Seminole allies; others either were returned to the plantations with their former "masters" or were killed. All around them in Florida, the prospect of capture and enslavement was imminent for the recalcitrant Black Seminoles as the Americans encroached further and further southward in Florida, seizing and settling the land occupied by Seminoles and their Black Seminole allies. Confronted with the recurrent danger of capture, and denied the earlier-pledged assistance from their British "allies" in The Bahamas, they

voyaged across the Gulfstream waters in canoes and wreckers, an undeniably formidable endeavor.

The forces of globalization and modernization are increasingly evident and have resulted tremendous socio-cultural change in Red Bays. The most significant catalyst was the construction of a road in 1968 that literally and figuratively served as a 'bridge' to the outside world (Newton 1968). For the first time since their arrival in 1821, Red Bays became accessible by vehicle, rather than solely by boat or footpaths through the Pineyard. The road was unpaved, however, a factor that presented an obstacle to easy accessibility. In the late 1980s the road was 'black-topped'; for the first time, Red Bays children had the opportunity to attend school beyond grade 6 in their own Primary School; they attend North Andros High School in Nicholls Town.¹ Other infrastructural improvements in Red Bays, most implemented within the past ten years, include electricity, a water pump and, notably, telephone service, that as of December 1998 has been extended so that each household now has access to a private telephone (replacing the sole 'community' telephone at the BATELCO office). The impact of this latter 'improvement' could potentially render a devastating blow to the incomes of two families in Red Bays if the jobs of the two women operators of the central telephone station (the only wage employment available in the entire settlement) are eventually deemed superfluous and are eliminated.

¹The name of the mascot for North Andros High School is the "Seminoles."

With the conversion to a primarily cash economy, young men and women are increasingly compelled (or enticed by the greater exposure provided by high school education) to leave there, in far greater numbers than their forebears, seeking employment opportunities available almost exclusively in Nassau, the capital city located on New Providence Island. The lack of opportunities "down home" is a predicament they share with many other Bahamians. Although physically located a mere twenty-five miles across the sea from Andros Island, Nassau is in many ways a 'world' away. For the people of Red Bays, a community that affords a relaxed, though economically poor, existence, where few people lock their doors, where conflicts are settled by fists and harsh words rather than guns, and where they have to travel 20 miles to the nearest settlement, conversion to the fast-paced and crowded Nassau lifestyle is daunting.

Contemporary life in Nassau is likened in a popular Bahamian song to living in "sardine cans," where all food and water are imported, and where people can no longer sleep soundly without bars on their windows. This depiction may seem extreme, but it is, unfortunately, indicative of life in this city that is becoming vastly overpopulated. Over 65% of the total Bahamian population currently reside on New Providence Island; measuring approximately 80 square miles (versus nearly 2300-square-mile-Andros Island), it is one of the smallest islands of the Bahamian archipelago. For Black Bahamians in particular, the influences of modern society, media exploitation,

and subjection to subordinate status in their own country (due to the nature of tourism) have all served to create a national atmosphere that is increasingly volatile. Economic diversification and redistribution of development projects to benefit the Family Islands could be a blessing for rural Bahamians, but may also be the salvation of the tourism business in Nassau where conditions--for both Bahamians and tourists--have deteriorated dramatically.

Traditions in Red Bays have changed significantly. Red Bayans' ancestors had a more intimate relationship with both the land and the sea. While current residents continue to subsist from what they catch in the sea, as did their ancestors, their relationship to the land has changed dramatically. Despite the fact that Andros Island possesses the largest tract of arable land in the country, the farming tradition has ended, a factor that has significantly altered the communal dynamic of the settlement where the majority of them traditionally traveled by boat once every year to spend 6 months farming their tract of land in Billy Coppitt.

The sea is sometimes approached as a stop-gap measure when all else fails--if no money from "other" sources is forthcoming, men, and sometimes women, may go out to sea to, hopefully to catch dinner, or to harvest sponges to sell to the local sponge merchant. Often the money obtained from sponging or the infrequent "big catch" is spent on consecutive nights of drinking until the money has been completely exhausted. The fact that they own only small fishing boats that are not sea worthy when the wind gusts on the high seas,

seems a testament to the diminished emphasis on this livelihood strategy. The influence of other lucrative informal economic strategies, especially in the 1980s, caused this shift of emphasis; funds that could have been used to purchase larger boats was directed instead toward other priorities.

The long-standing tradition of "sewing baskets" in Red Bays remains a vital subsistence strategy, engaged in by most women in the settlement and by a few men. Their unique style of basketry, a style that bears an unmistakable resemblance to that in the Sea Islands of South Carolina and that of the West Coast of Africa, is instantly recognizable to other Bahamians as "Red Bays' baskets." These baskets command a premium price in the marketplaces across The Bahamas.

The primary thrust of this research was to obtain answers to questions of cultural identity, both how these Black Seminole descendants identity have formulated their own identities and how they are defined by other Bahamians. Following are the questions and a synopsis of the answers I received:

Question (1): Is there still a strong identification with either Indian and/or African ancestry in the Andros communities in which I will conduct research?

Answer: No longer influenced by adjacent communities of Seminole Indians, Black Seminoles who escaped to The Bahamas settled into a new identity as Bahamians. They cling to the proud legacy of their ancestors who resisted enslavement and braved the Gulfstream waters in canoes to find

freedom in Red Bays on "The Promised isLand" of Andros. Yet they unequivocally identify with the only home they have known, The Bahamas.

Question (2): Does identification with Indian ancestry afford some political or social (e.g., governmental recognition, business ownership) benefit to the Androsians as it does with Black Seminoles in the United States?

Answer: Unlike the Black Seminoles of Oklahoma, USA, the fact of their unique heritage gains them no special recognition by the Bahamian government, politically or socially.

Question (3): If the population does not identify with either heritage (Seminole or African) why not, and with what have they replaced it?

Answer: Their daily existence does not contemplate complex associations with African or Seminole heritage. They identify simply as Bahamians who happen to have a unique ancestry that they enjoy talking about to visitors, but that plays little or no active role in their daily lives.

Question (4): Is there evidence of cultural traits identifiable from either Indian and/or African ancestry, or a fusion of both, in the language, religious customs, crafts, livelihood strategies, social structure in these settlements today?

Answer: Although there are remnants of Seminole cultural traditions and significant instances of African cultural traditions, the Black Seminole descendants in Red Bays and in other settlements of Andros Island do not consciously identify their culture as such. The livelihood and subsistence strategies they employ are simply viewed as their "Bahamian" way of life.

I readily concede how precariously close some of these questions come to a cultural essentialist argument. This was not my explicit objective, but it became increasingly clear to me that to merely search out cultural “traits” or material culture would not allow me an insight into the deeper underlying issues of cultural identity and cultural retentions. After the experience of living on Andros Island for one year, the majority of that time in the settlement of Red Bays, I discovered that what has been preserved is not necessarily tangibly evident, but is, rather, epistemological--a complex of knowledge, beliefs, ways of knowing that derive from the synthesis of heritage and adaptation.

So what, in the final analysis, is the significance of their history to their contemporary conceptualization of identity? My research indicates that a review of their history is testimony to a non-essentialist view of identity as “an everchanging process which always leaves something ‘outside’ because of its very nature of being in a state of constant change and flux based upon opposition to some ‘other.’ It is an act of power” (Hall 1996: 5). In the African tradition of *sankofa*, they are remembering their past in order to see their way to their future. Their contemporary conceptualization of identity is premised upon the necessity of adaptation to the Bahamian culture that is in the throes of adjustment to the forces of globalization. Identity construction is contextual; in the various contexts into which they have been thrust, Africans in the New World diaspora have had to repeatedly renegotiate their identities. The Black Seminoles and their descendants are no exception.

APPENDIX A
NAMES OF THE 97 FOREIGN NEGRO SLAVES SEIZED IN ANDROS IN 1828

Stephen Williams	Robert Mitchell
Peter Collins	Jim Wetherford
Affy	Janry Wetherford
Adam	Frank
Jam Louis [Sam Lewis]	Ben Hendron
Mary Paul	Teresa
Nancy Miller	Moses [Newton]
Eliza Miller	Ben Abraham
Sam Riley	Molly
Absolom Tucker	Timus
Blown Hendron	Phoebe
Stephen Hendron	Luretia
Richard Hendron	Jack Wright
John Mote	Affie Hendron
Issac Hendron	Prince McQueen
Issac Laure	Anna and 3 children
Manuel	John Russel
Sizery and 3 children	Lucretia Flores
George Thomas	John
Matilda and son	Sim
George David	Salla
Bella	Mary Frances
Mary Hender	Mary Cooper
John Hender	W. Russel
Charles Roberts	Polly
Sue Henden	Betsy and child called Betsy
Lizy Henden	Eliza and her daughter called Kate
Scipio	Limerick
Johnny Bowlegs	John Robinson
Phepe Bowlegs	Hetty
Diana	Manuel
Seqzie and 6 children	Sophia
Mary Bowlegs and 5 children	Jacob
Maley and children	

Because this record often lists only one name and does not specify whether the name is a given or surname, it is difficult to directly connect some of these names to people now in Andros. However, based upon the information I gleaned from interviews, several connections can be drawn. The surnames Russel (Russell), Bowlegs, Louis (Lewis) Miller and McQueen are all still represented in Red Bays and other North Andros communities.

Source: Wood, D.E. A Guide to Selected Sources for the History of The Seminole Settlements at Red Bays, Andros -- 1817-1980. Nassau, Bahamas: Dept. of Archives.

APPENDIX B
COMMON BAHAMIAN SURNAMES AND THEIR ISLAND OF ORIGIN

Abaco--Sweeting, Lowe, Malone, Fiest (rare to find very dark-skinned African persons on Abaco)

Andros--Bowleg(s), Russell, Newton, Treco, Gaither, Barr, Knowles, Lewis, Miller, Coleby, Romer, Moxley

Acklins--Hanna, Heastie, Tynes, Collie

Cat Island--McKenzie, Thurston, Hepburn, Stubbs, Seymour, Turner, Larimore, Hart, Zonicle (Zannicle in old records), Saunders, Poitier

Crooked Island--Moss, Chisholm, Darling, Gibson, McKinney (1/2 of family white, 1/2 black), Ferguson, Farquharson

Eleuthera--Sweeting, Albury, Bethel (Bethell), Sands, Sawyer [all 5 of these families were white Bahamian or very light skinned--and are wealthy], Johnson, Thompson, Kemp, Mingo, Gibson (but they're originally from Crooked Is.), Ingraham, Culmer, Carey (large number of names here because they kept a stable economy & therefore did not lose as much of their population as other islands).

Exuma--Rolle, Bowe, Forbes, Bodie (Bode in old records), Minns

Grand Bahama--Russell, Wilchcombe; Pinder

Inagua--(lots of people originally from Long Island & Crooked Island) Mullings, Ford, Symonette (Originally from Haiti--light skinned ; salt mining island)

Long Island--Wells, Cartwright, Turnquest, Taylor, Knowles, Martinborough, Burroughs, Minnis, Gray, Miller, Ginton, Watson, Dean

Mayaguana--Leadon (lots of names similar to Acklins & Crooked Island)

Ragged Island--Lockhart, Wilson, Wallace, Munroe

Rum Cay--Strachan

San Salvador --Nixon, Williams

Source: Grace Turner, Pompey Museum, Nassau, Bahamas,
personal communication, 1997.

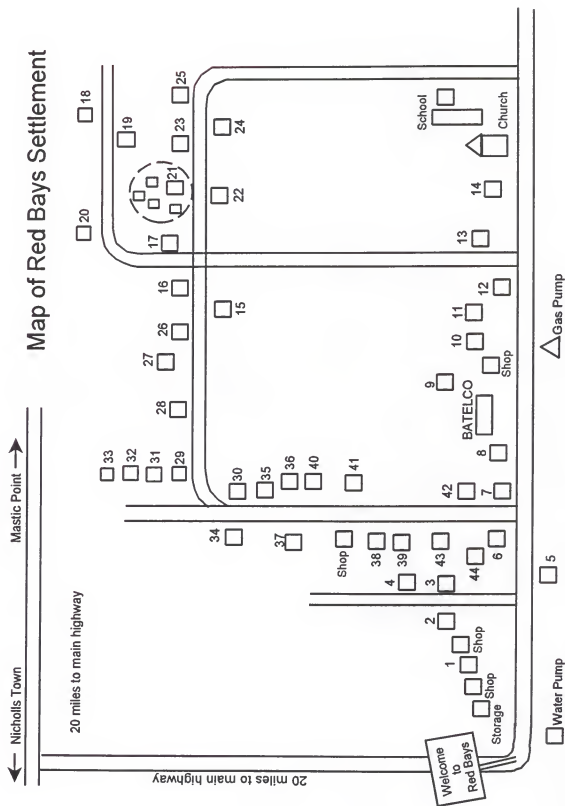
APPENDIX C
A MAP OF RED BAYS

House #	Total Residents
1	4
2	9
3	4
4	6
5	1
6	1
7	7
8	6
9	1
10	8
11	14
12	19
13	12
14	1
15	1
16	16
17	11
18	5
19	3
20	1
21	19
22	22

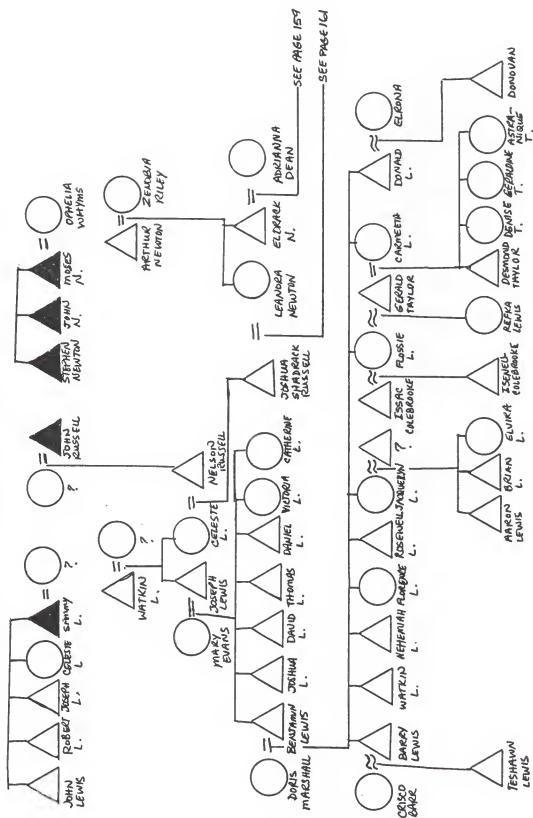
House #	Total Residents
23	3
24	19
25	8
26	10
27	1
28	3
29	1
30	6
31	4
32	2
33	1
34	3
35	13
36	1
37	6
38	1
39	1
40	1
41	6
42	6
43	13
44	7

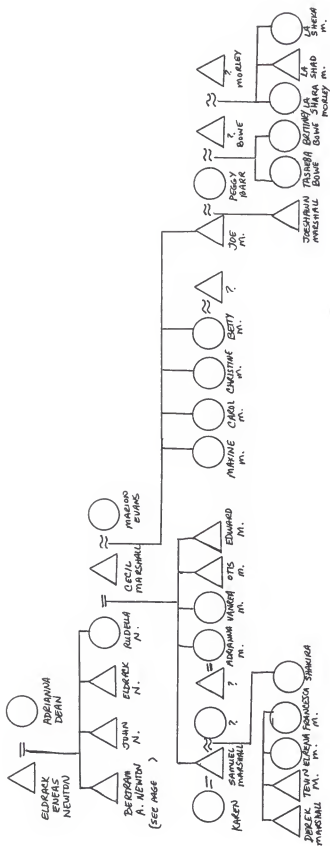
Total Residents = 283 (as of October 1997)

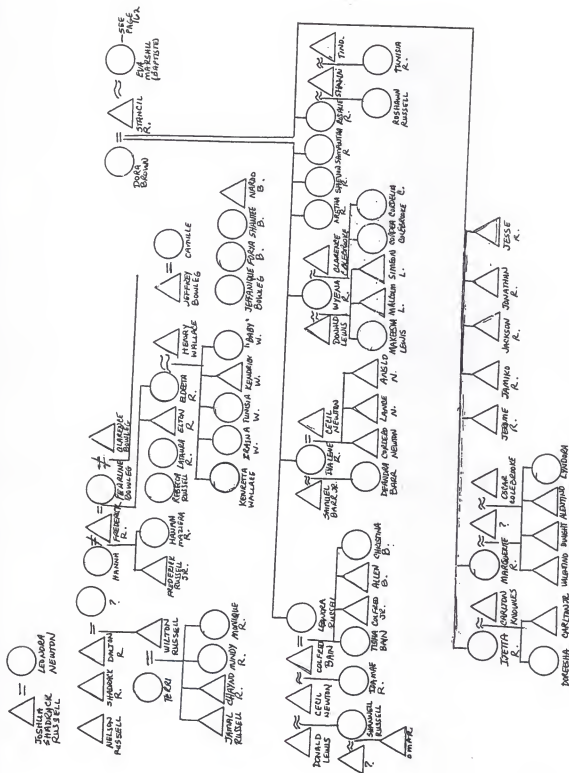
Map of Red Bays Settlement

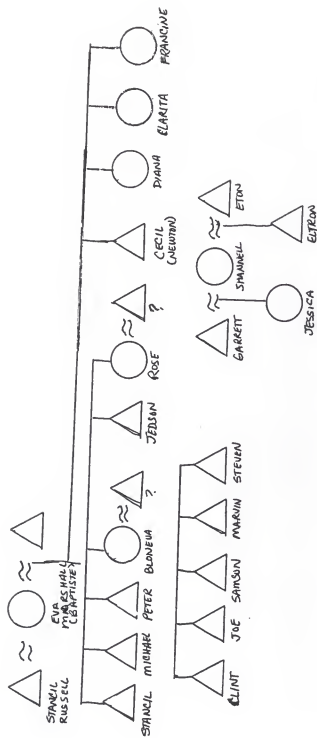


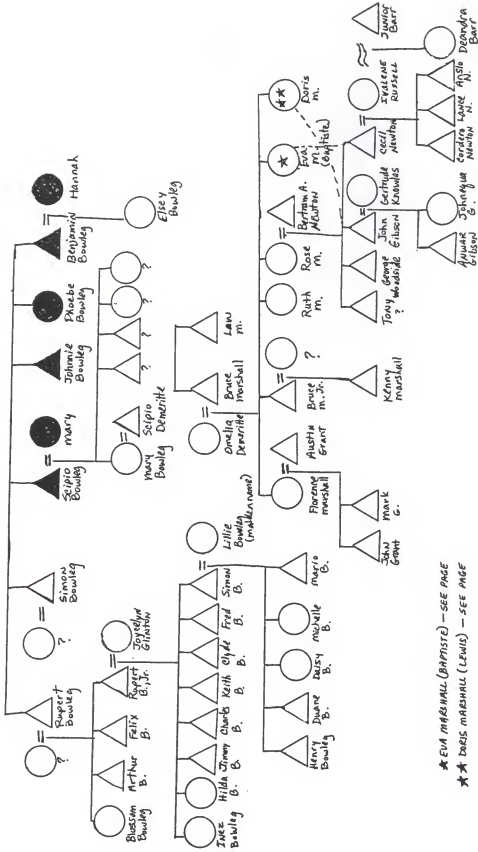
APPENDIX D
GENEALOGICAL CHARTS OF RED BAYS FAMILIES











★ EVA MARSHALL (BAPTISTE) — SEE PAGE

★★ DORIS MARSHALL (LEWIS) — SEE PAGE

†The highlighted names are found on the Registry of "Slaves" in Appendix A

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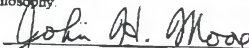
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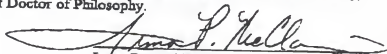
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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Anthropology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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